WITHDRAWN

Point and Purpose in Preaching

ELIJAH P. BROWN

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Point and Purpose in Preaching

By

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I

PRACTICAL POINTS

IN the preparation of these pages the aim has been to give that which would be practical and helpful to the young minister who is beginning to find out that he didn't learn all there is to know from his theological professor.

No claim is made for complete originality in what is given, but all that is said has passed through the alembic of personal experience. Much has been assimilated from a very wide acquaintance and association with many kinds of preachers; some has come through close observation and careful study of those who, like the Master, were always gladly heard by the common people, and still more, perhaps, has come from reading and reflection.

A young woman, who had studied Latin for a couple of weeks and then stopped, explained that she only wanted to get an insight into it, but to know anything about preaching we have got to go very much deeper than that. We must not only go at it, but keep everlastingly at it. Learning how to preach is much like learning how to swim. Others may tell us how to do it, but the thing that counts is the paddling we do ourselves.

A man cannot learn how to preach by going to school and reading books any more than he can learn

how to ride a bicycle by going to school and reading books. Going to school and reading books will greatly help us, if reinforced by our own personal experience, because all true wisdom has been hand-picked from the tree of knowledge by somebody. Books and schools may supply us with good material for wings, but we must do our own flying.

Books may tell us a thousand things Solomon never dreamed of, but books alone never taught anybody how to hoe corn, climb a tree or preach a sermon. The only school that can ever teach us that fire will burn is the one that raises a blister. Schools can teach us a lot of things about preaching, but they cannot make us preachers, any more than a brass foundry can make the halo that makes a saint. It takes the sea to make a sailor, and Hard Scrabble Circuit to make the preacher. But after having had some experience of our own we quickly learn how to profit by the experience of others.

Some of the most practical lessons we have learned about preaching—outside of our own individual efforts—we have learned from the preaching of other preachers. We should endeavor to learn something about how preaching should be done from every man we hear preach, whether he knows any more about it than we do or not. If he is a success we should try to discover why, and if he is a misfit we should try just as hard to find out what makes him so.

If the preaching secures and holds our attention there is a reason for it, and we should try to learn what it is, and if it is not interesting we should

endeavor to discover what would make it so. If the man bores us we should study him all the more carefully, so that if we bore people ourselves it will not be in the same way he has tired us.

It is a good plan, therefore, to hear other preachers as often as possible, whether they are lamps, pitchers or trumpets. Sometimes we may hear a minister who will put us under the juniper tree because he can preach so much better than we can ever hope to do, but we will be just as certain to hear others who will encourage us by their indifferent efforts.

Bishop Simpson was saved to the ministry by hearing a man who was a great failure as a preacher. From the poor man's poor effort he learned that God can use a mighty poor stick when He has to, and this encouraged him to remain in the ministry, which he had been thinking of giving up through a discouraging sense of his own inefficiency.

It is doubtful if anything will add so much to the effectiveness of preaching as having a definite object in view when preparing the sermon. A sermon should be planned for a certain purpose as surely as a house should be planned for a certain purpose. No sensible man ever thinks of using a rat-tail file to shave with, but worse blunders are continually being made with sermons, and we are the very fellows who have sometimes made them.

In preparing our sermons we need to keep well before us the impressions we want to make on the minds and hearts of those who will hear us. We should have clearly in mind the resolutions we would

have made, and the decisions we would inspire, for it is as necessary to have an aim in preaching as it is in shooting squirrels. If the doctors were as reckless about what they gave their patients as some preachers are about what they give their congregations, undertakers would become a more cheerful body of men.

It is a great mistake to fire into the air if we would hit anything on the ground. David laid Goliath in the dust because he aimed at his head. He didn't throw at the hill on which he stood, and therein lies the weakness of some otherwise excellent preaching. It doesn't draw a bead on anything. The trouble with some of our sermons is that they are not expected to hit anything this side of the moon—and they don't.

When a ship is about to sail for the other side of the world the captain picks out one little spot on the map—not a whole page—and he sails for that. When a ship sails for Europe it doesn't sail for Europe—it sails for Liverpool, but in our preaching some of us sail for a whole hemisphere.

Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost had remarkable results because it had a definite purpose. He said—" Ye men of Israel—ye have done thus and so," and that kind of preaching always makes the fur fly. This is what made Henry Ward Beecher a great preacher:

" I had preached two years at Lawrenceburg, Ind.," he says in his Yale Lectures, " when I went to Indianapolis. While there I was much discontented. I had been discouraged for two years. I had expected that there would be a general interest, and

especially in the week before the communion season. In the West we had protracted meetings, and the people would come up to a high point of feeling, but I could never get them beyond that. They would come down again and there would be no conversions. I said there was a reason why when the apostles preached they succeeded, and I will find it out, if it is to be found out.

"I took every single instance in the record, where I could find one of their sermons, analyzed it, and asked myself—'What were the circumstances? Who were the people? What did he do?' and I studied the sermon until I got this idea: That the apostles were accustomed first to feel for a ground on which the people and they stood together, and a common ground where they could meet. Then they heaped up a large number of particulars of knowledge, which everybody would admit, placed in a proper form before their minds, then they brought it to bear upon them with all their excited heart and feeling.

"That was the first definite idea of taking aim that I had in my mind. 'Now,' said I, 'I will make my sermon so.' First I sketched out the things we all know. 'You all know you are living in a world perishing under your feet. You all know that the time is extremely uncertain; that you cannot tell whether you will live another month or week. You all know that your destiny in the life that is to come depends upon the character you are forming in this life,' and in that way I went on with my 'You all knows,' until I had about forty of them. Then I

turned around and brought it to bear upon them with all my might, and seventeen men were awakened under that sermon.

"I never felt so triumphant in my life. I cried all the way home. I said to myself, 'Now I know how to preach.' I could not make another sermon for a month that was good for anything. I had used up all my powder and shot on that one. But for the first time in my life I had got the idea of taking aim. I soon added to it the idea of analyzing the people I was to preach to, and so taking aim for specialties. Of course this came gradually and, later, with growing knowledge and experience."

The better the preacher knows the people to whom he is to preach the easier it will be for him to have a clearly defined purpose in his preaching. A knowledge of individual needs makes it easy to suit the preaching to the people in the pews. If the preacher is a stranger to those who make up his congregation, then the better he knows humanity in general and human nature in particular the more helpful he can be. It is a great waste of time and effort to prepare sermons for angels that you expect to preach to men and women.

It is safe to take it for granted than the things known of one congregation are in the main true of every other. There will always be some poor soul who is in trouble and wants to get out of it, and who may have come to that very meeting hoping to learn how. There will always be those who want to trust God, and yet do not know exactly how to do it.

Some of the scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites will be there, and so will the man who is hiding his sin.

If every sermon covered some of the things named in the prophecy Jesus applied to Himself at Nazareth, you can depend upon it that somebody in the meeting would always get his portion in due season. Here is the prophecy:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4: 18–19).

It is the business of the sharpshooter to shoot to kill, and it ought to be the purpose of every sermon to in some way help answer the prayer, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and the more preaching we do with that end clearly in view, the more notice our ministry will attract in heaven.

In every congregation there will be those who are poor in the true riches; those who are broken-hearted over their wrong-doing; those who are in the captivity of hard bondage to sin, and those who are spiritually blind, as well as those who are bruised by what they have suffered from transgression, and that very hour may be God's time for doing something for them, so that it should not be hard for the preacher to do something more than shell the woods, even when preaching to a strange congregation.

The voice has so much to do with the effectiveness of the preaching that very particular and constant attention ought to be given to it. To have a good voice it is a good plan to invariably and continually use the strongest tone you can create. Not the loudest, but the strongest. Joke in it, converse in it, shout in it and whisper in it. Yes, and think in it, for as a man thinketh so is he. The colloquial element wears best, and holds attention best, because no other way of speaking has so much of variety in it.

The man who is monotonous cannot long be listened to with interest, no matter how excellent the subject matter of his address may be. Variety in tone and movement are as necessary in speaking as in music. We all know how crazing a tune on one string can be. The man who always says everything in exactly the same way will soon be without much of a congregation to say it to.

A poor voice with distinct enunciation is more agreeable and better understood than a good one without it, and to secure such a voice the consonants must be articulated distinctly, but not to the neglect of vowels. The voice can be much strengthened by frequently and forcibly articulating the vowel sounds in a staccato way. Delsarte required his pupils to practice daily the syllables po, la, mo on every note within the compass of their voices. I wish all the railway brakemen and some of the preachers had to go to that same Po-la-mo school.

The man who has fallen into the habit of preach-

ing as if he had a broken jaw might learn something very much to his advantage by making a pilgrimage to St. Louis, to hear the man who calls the trains in the big Union station there. That man knows that he must make the waiting multitudes understand what he says or he will lose his job, and so he takes pains to earn his pay.

Articulation may be much improved by a few minutes practice each day, in running over a sentence in an inaudible way, as if trying to communicate a secret by the motion of the lips. What a speaker needs is to strengthen his ordinary conversational voice, without giving it a hard firm quality; that is, without destroying its flexibility and power of adaptation to every mood.

At least two Methodist bishops have strong voices that have been built up from weak ones, but there is a vast difference between them. One is full of flexibility and variety, and the other is as monotonous as a Chinese gong. No man has discovered the capabilities of his voice until he has discovered the capabilities of his soul. Ruskin said, "All the greatest music is by the human voice, and with the Greeks the god of music was also the god of righteousness."

The preacher ought to look after his voice as carefully as the woodman does after his axe, or the barber after his razor, or the farmer after his plow, for it is the thing upon which the success of his ministry will largely depend. A poor voice is about the poorest thing that ever goes into the pulpit. There are some voices that enthuse, thrill and inspire, and there are

others that make you want to gnaw a file and flee to the wilderness.

Wrong breathing makes a lot of other things wrong. No speaker can speak correctly whose breathing is all done in the upper part of his lungs. The only correct breathing is deep abdominal breathing. Animals breathe in that way and so do all young children. Examine any young child and you will find that it is a deep breather. Indians and all other primitive people breathe in the same way. In our civilization we bind ourselves up around the loins with our clothing in such a way that the muscles causing the breathing become so weakened that they cannot perform their functions, and the breathing is confined to the upper part of the lungs.

The way to get our breathing back, as it was done in our early childhood, is to exercise the proper muscles until they become strong enough to do their work, when they will take it up and go on with it without our having to give it any more thought than we do to the beating of the heart.

A careful compliance with the following will cause any one to breathe correctly in less than a week. It is the method by which breathing is taught in the theatrical profession:

1. Lie down on your back and make yourself limp, with all muscles relaxed.

2. Put one hand over your waist, and with it exert a slight pressure.

3. Pronounce the vowel sounds a, e, i, o, u in a clear and firm staccato way against your hand, as if

you were trying to burst a belt or lift a weight. Occasionally substitute for the vowel sounds, also in a staccato way, a-ale, ah-arm, aw-all, a-at, with a little more force.

Do this several times a day, two or three minutes at a time, without paying any attention to your breathing. Should there be any discomfort in your throat, stop for the time being. In four or five days you will be astonished to find you are breathing down deep without an effort.

After a few days place a large book—as a dictionary—where you held your hand, and try to lift it with the muscles beneath it as you repeat the vowel sounds. From time to time increase the weight by adding more books.

When your breathing has become correct you will find your voice very much strengthened, and its carrying power greatly increased. You will speak with a third of the effort previously required. After the first week it will only be necessary to practice the exercises at long intervals.

There is no form of oratory in which strong feeling will not contribute largely to success, or the absence of it prove a decided drawback. The cultivation of feeling is therefore important, and the more so as one's circumstances tend to its suppression. The methods of cultivating the emotions are few, but the results of habitually pursuing them are sure.

Good authorities recommend the frequent reading of the best pathetic writings, the masterpieces of

emotional oratory, with meditation upon the most moving terms and similes, vividly conceiving the scenes depicted. To hear speakers who seem to feel, or are the cause of feeling in others, is an inspiration. No preacher can long maintain his hold upon a people if he is simply entertaining, or even instructive in his preaching. He must be able at times to so stir their feelings that they will be moved deeply.

Closely related to the care of the voice is the care of the rest of the man who does the preaching, for the engineer who runs his train to the satisfaction of the superintendent of the road must be as prudent and skillful in his care of the engine as he is in ringing the bell and blowing the whistle. And so the preacher must not only learn how to keep up steam, but how to use it to the best advantage.

Sleep before preaching is beyond all comparison the best preparation for it. A cat-nap of ten minutes a little while before going to the pulpit will make you feel like a lion while in it. It is a good thing to disrobe and go to bed in the regular way for a few minutes between services, whether you sleep or not. The mere fact of undressing and lying down will give you rest by relieving the tension. One eminent preacher told me that he had followed this practice for more than thirty years, and no matter how many times he had to speak on Sunday he went to every service fresh. For the tired brain worker a day's lay off in bed is said to be the best rest cure as well as the cheapest.

We should not be so completely taken up with the making and preaching of sermons as to forget that

we have great treasure in earthen vessels, and that we are expected to take good care of it. There are some sins that can never be forgiven in this world, and I don't see how they can be in the next, and one of them is chronic poor health that has been caused by chronic neglect. If we could only know as we are known some of us would probably discover that there is about as much pure and undefiled religion in taking proper care of our health as there is in making long prayers in public.

The engineer who would give all his attention to shining up the nickel plating on his machinery and do nothing to prevent unnecessary friction in his engine would not soon be promoted for fidelity to duty, and yet he would be a wise virgin to the preacher who fails to take proper care of his health. Even if you have given your body to the Lord to be a living sacrifice, He expects you to do what you can to keep it from becoming a dead one. So the preacher should at least try to take as good care of himself as the old-time circuit rider did of his horse.

So let us straighten up, and try to keep ourselves straight, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day when the deadly microbe sweeps through the land. Let us stand, therefore, and make a good fight for health, and we will flourish like a palm tree when more careless preachers begin to go down. Let us gird up our loins then, and throw back our shoulders, fill our lungs with air, come down squarely on our heels and step off with an iron determination to hold our own.

Shoulder braces may help us some, but a braced up determination to keep straight will help us more. Physical discipline is certain to suggest and promote physical self-respect. The attitude of strength and dignity will soon make a man feel the way he looks. To stiffen the spine is certain to strengthen the moral man. When Enoch walked with God you can depend upon it that he didn't do it with dragging feet and a hanging head.

The preacher should endeavor by forethought and prudence to keep himself up to concert pitch in physical vigor, for the mind not only works best in a strong healthy body, but a rugged appearance is such good medicine for weakly people. If the preacher looks strong and vigorous it puts everything he says in italics, for a note from a pipe organ does more to make the rafters tremble than one from a tin whistle.

An old farmer said of Daniel Webster: "The old feller didn't say much, but his looks made every word he did say weigh a pound." It is much better to use forethought in preserving the health while we have it, than it is to pay a doctor from ten cents to ten dollars a minute to try to get it back after it has been lost.

It is a poor plan to be all the time looking at your own tongue and feeling your own pulse, unless you want to be an angel prematurely, for if there is anything in the law of suggestion, there is no surer way to become sick in reality than to imagine you are ill. When you feel well notice it, rejoice in it, and like the glad woman who found her lost piece of silver,

have your friends and neighbors rejoice with you, but when you feel bad don't pay much attention to it or say anything about it. Keep yourself cheerful by thinking of how much you have to be thankful for, and the first thing you know you will feel as if you could jump over a house.

So don't worry, but look on the bright side, and learn how to find it even at midnight. Eat wholesome food, have faith in God, and sleep with your windows open toward Jerusalem every night in the year, and by some hook or crook get the janitor to change the air in the church at least every fall and spring. Be as regular in your habits as the ticking of a clock, and avoid the pace that kills. Keep yourself young by keeping yourself growing, for no man can become old until he begins to dry up and go to seed. As John D's pastor wrote him on his seventieth birthday:

> "Cling to the habit of still being young.
> Cultivate leisure without being lazy.
> Garner all joys the poets have sung,
> And prove every year that Dr. Osler is crazy."

No matter how you feel; keep on saying with grand old Caleb: "I am as strong this day as I was. As my strength was even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in," and prove it by asking for an appointment where the giants are.

When it comes to the delivery of his sermon the preacher should summon all his will power to bear upon the task before him, and determine to do his

prayerful best toward accomplishing the purpose for which he is there. Nothing will do more to bring success than a fixed determination to succeed. As you begin, look bright and interested, whether you feel that way or not. Let your attitude be erect and your manner confident, as if you expected to accomplish something.

Speak in an earnest whole-hearted tone, slowly at first, but very distinctly, and not loud but clear. Look at those nearest to you, and address your opening remarks to them. This will keep you from striking too high a key, as might be the case if you looked at those farthest away. In beginning, it is well also not to look at blank faces, or they will make you feel blank. Look rather at the faces that are bright with intelligence and full of interest, and they will stimulate you to speak with animation, without which your preaching will fall dead. Life begets life. Look your congregation in the eye. Do not look at the floor or the ceiling.

Keep yourself wide awake physically if you would arouse people intellectually and spiritually. Try to be interesting from the very beginning, by having something interesting to say, and saying it in an interesting way. Great things are done when you awaken a lively interest in the very first breath. If you are a live wire don't let the people be too long in finding it out.

The preacher should handle the Bible in public as if he had a love and reverence for it. Spiritual people are sometimes pained by the reckless way in

which the minister handles the Bible in the pulpit. He grabs it up as if it were not of much importance, reads his text from it, then shuts it abruptly and throws it on the pulpit desk with an air that seems to say: "There! That's all I want of You."

Sometimes in beginning an address for which ample preparation has been made, the mind will suddenly become a blank, and the speaker will be unable to remember anything he meant to say. Where disease and utter exhaustion is not the cause of this do not aggravate the matter by becoming frightened, but maintain your presence of mind, and say something else that will not be out of place. You will generally be astonished at the promptness with which your scattered thoughts will return, and the clearness with which they will present themselves.

Should you at any time find yourself speaking in a high key, introduce a brief quotation. This makes it natural to lower the pitch, and in the same tone you can add a comment on the quotation and retain the lower key. It is not difficult to master this common defect if once the attention is fixed upon it with determination. Should other methods fail introduce an anecdote, and this will compel it. Be careful not to destroy the effect of an illustration by the way in which you give it. Don't preach it or declaim it. *Tell* it.

In talking to children use words and figures they can understand, and talk about things they would like to hear, or need to know or feel. Use plenty of imagery and illustration, for children think in pic-

tures. In talking with little folks try to draw them out to express their own thoughts and ideas, and you will learn something worth knowing. Children think much, and are full of ideas, because there is so much around them that is strange and wonderful. I can remember thoughts I had when I was five years old.

Children are great builders, but they cannot create anything. They are incessantly building out of the scanty material they have on hand. A child can take a dog and a horse and a cow and from them make animals enough to fill Noah's ark, but it must have the dog, the horse and the cow to make them out of. Whenever a new thought is dropped into the mind of a child, you have an illustration of Adam naming the animals, for every new thought requires the making of a new symbol.

All primitive words are of necessity derived from things familiar in daily life, just as the horn of the wild animal would naturally become a symbol for power, and the wing of the mother bird would mean protection. Just as the baby begins its language, so all language had its beginning, from Adam down to John Smith. As soon as a new thought enters the mind of the little one it begins to build a new house to shelter it, but it has to make it out of the word stuff it has on hand, somewhat as new clothes are made for the boy out of his father's old ones.

This shows why we ought to take great pains to be clearly understood when we talk to children, for if we are not careful we may give them distorted

notions that will cling to them for life, just as a wrong idea of an animal would have made Adam give it a wrong name.

When a little boy first heard of the Garden of Eden he had never seen anything bearing the name of garden except a truck patch, and it was ever afterward hard for him to think of Adam without seeing him with a hoe in his hand. When he thought of original sin he would also think of cabbage and potatoes, and weeds and bugs and purslane were always mixed up with Adam's paradise. It makes many things wrong for a child to have its mind thrown out of focus by wrong notions of new things.

As two little girls walked home from Sunday-school one morning, when the lesson had been on the soul, one said to the other, " Mary, will we take our clothes to heaven with us when we die ? " " No," said Mary, " we won't take nothing but our insides ! "

What a dreadful idea, and all because somebody didn't put clear glass in the window. I have heard preachers talk to little children in a Sunday-school as if they thought every child there had the wisdom of Solomon. Such men never seem to know that lambs don't stand on their hind legs to eat. Every one who talks to little children ought to know that little words were made for little people.

I doubt if there is any other one thing that has so much to do with the success of public speaking as a good bright light, properly placed. The speaker ought to be able to look into the eyes of everybody in his congregation, and every one ought to be able

to look into his. There is something that goes through the eye that cannot go in any other way. And then, too, a good bright light has the same effect upon the spirits of people that sunshine has, while a poor light is as depressing as bad weather. Dingy smoky lamps invite failure.

The next important thing is pure air. If we could always have good air in which to preach, we would all do better preaching. Very few janitors know the difference between ventilation and temperature. If you say anything about the air being bad they will go and look at the thermometer. They think bad air is always hot, and it never gets into their heads that air can be bad and cold at the same time. There are too many churches in which the same air is breathed over and over all winter, and then they wonder what is the matter with the preacher.

Before the millennium can come there will have to be schools in which janitors and railway porters and brakemen shall be compelled to learn something about ventilation, and there are also plenty of architects and some preachers who ought to be sent to that same school. In the building of churches too little thought is given to the question of ventilation. Too many otherwise good buildings are so constructed that the air could never be changed without the help of a cyclone.

If disturbances occur, as the crying of a babe or the running about of a dog, do not look in that direction, or it will divert attention from you. At such times look at the most attentive faces you can see,

and their interest will pull you through. It never does any good to call attention to an annoyance, but generally makes it worse. If you make a bad break in your speech don't stop to correct it, but push on quickly and few will notice it.

If a deaf person is placed close in front of you with the request that you will make him hear, do not be led into straining yourself in trying to do it. You are there to preach to those who have ears to hear. So speak no louder than is natural. It is better that one should not hear than that all should have to listen with discomfort, and that you should wear yourself out. I have seen good sermons spoiled for those who could hear by the preaching all being done for a man who couldn't hear thunder.

Do not tire out your congregation before you begin by going over the announcements and church notices until they have become like quail in the wilderness to everybody in the house. I have known preachers to do this even where they had printed bulletins.

Don't fall into the habit of leaning over or against the pulpit desk, with legs crossed, when making announcements or beginning your sermon. It will put a wall between you and some of the pews. When sitting in the pulpit, do that. Don't get down on your shoulder blades.

Never drink water while speaking. It not only aggravates the thirst, but is a bad nervous habit to fall into. If much indulged in it creates uneasiness in the congregation, for any appearance of discom-

fort in the speaker makes those who hear him ill at ease. Looking at your watch frequently should also be avoided for the same reasons.

In speaking to a large audience keep your voice directed straight toward the center, or your address will be a disappointment, for the reason that much of it will not be heard. Do not keep your head turning from side to side, and never turn to address those behind you. Talk to the center of the house, and all will hear you. I once heard an eminent man in a large auditorium, and never was more disappointed. Although I had a seat well forward I seldom heard a complete sentence. He would begin looking toward me, and finish with his face turned in the opposite direction. I could not understand a word when his face was from me, and wherever I looked I could see faces full of disappointment.

Little words are better than big ones if they express the idea. It is a waste of effort to take a bushel basket to carry home a pound of butter. Try to learn the cause of your failures, for you will never hit the bull's-eye unless you can find out what makes you miss it. Write for ideas. Shaking a tree will sooner or later bring down an apple if it has any on it. Read books that stir up ideas in you, and keep your thinker wound up and going. If you are disturbed by an unsympathetic or quizzical face look away from it to a friendly one.

Encourage your wife to tell you when you are beginning to fall into preacher ways, mannerisms and faults of speech, and don't turn blue around the ears

when she does it. Never be disheartened by apparent failure.

The preacher ought not to be any more afraid of proper criticism than Elijah was of Ahab. We would all be better preachers if we could occasionally have an X-ray turned on ourselves, our motives and the work we do. If we would lead others we must not be afraid to step off alone. We should get all the lessons and hints we can from criticism whenever it comes, and whenever we discover a real fault we should try to hit it squarely between the eyes. Some preachers are kept at the foot of the ladder mainly because they are so thin skinned on this line.

The fear of criticism has made many a man live on lower ground than the Lord wanted him to occupy. An honest critic is a faithful friend, and happy is the man who has one. For some troubles the surgeon's knife is much better than a bread and milk poultice. Paul was half-killed a good many times before he could say, "I have fought a good fight."

If the key-note of a preacher's life is, "Thy will be done," no criticism can hurt him, and if his mind is wholly given to bringing the water of life to those who need it, it will be all the same whether he is a pewter mug or a silver pitcher. When it comes to a question of usefulness the wooden bread plate has the souvenir teaspoon beaten to a frazzle. Our success may not come just when we expect it, nor in the way we expect it, but it will come if we deserve it, and every good lick we strike brings it nearer and makes it surer.

II

WHY WE MISS THE BULL'S-EYE

"IF you can't find out what makes you miss, you will never hit the bull's-eye," was posted in big letters on the wall of a shooting gallery, and if Solomon ever said anything more true I have been unable to find the chapter and verse in which it is recorded.

The man who not only falls down-stairs, but keeps on falling down-stairs every time he starts for the top of the house, has something radically wrong with either his head or his heels, and if he cannot find out what it is that makes him stumble, he might as well make up his mind to stay in the cellar, and the sooner he comes to that conclusion the fewer black and blue places he will have on him.

There is no trouble about finding out what makes other men fail. We are all past masters at doing that. The first roustabout you see cleaning a street can tell you why this or that man was not a brilliant success as mayor of the city. There is not one of us who cannot talk for a week on the mistakes of Moses and other men, big and little, and there never was a man in the pew who didn't know to a dot just what ailed the preacher.

There has probably never been a lion that some mouse did not criticize. It is so easy to tell all about

the size and twist of the mote in our brother's eye, but when it comes to knowing with mathematical precision the exact curvature of the beam in our own eye—there's the rub. The Eskimos can see the moons of Jupiter with the naked eye, but they eat pecks of dirt without even knowing it.

Many a church pillar who can see big spots on his preacher firmly believes that standing on the bank and throwing a straw to a drowning man is missionary work. It is so easy to tell why John Smith can't knock the persimmon, but so difficult to explain to the court why we can't do it. The greatest of all conundrums is not, "Who is the smallest man mentioned in the Bible?" but "Why can't I hit the bull's-eye?"

Why is it that Jones always reaches the top of the hill with the certainty of a woman getting to the bargain counter, while I am as sure to find myself on the flat of my back, with my feet up in the air, as a turkey is to lose its head about Thanksgiving time? These are perplexities in comparison with which a fog bank would look like a plate glass window to the man who has a thinker that he keeps wound up and going, and over which he will scratch his head long after his hair has ceased to curl.

I know more in a minute than Jones does in an hour and a half, and to every talent he has I have at least two and a quarter, and yet he gets there with the goods before I can load my wheelbarrow, and now what I want to know is, "What is the matter with me?"

Such questions as this some of us often ask the man whose face we see in the glass when we shave, and yet from the flops we keep on getting whenever we try to climb the slippery hill, we are not certain we have ever found the right answer.

There seems to be little doubt, then, that here is a long felt want, into which somebody ought to dump a cart-load or two of practical wisdom, for the sake of the folks who would like to at least come within winking distance of that bull's-eye, and that is why I am going to try to do something that will either kill or cure, as the young doctor did when he wrote the prescription that fixed the patient.

If I can help John Smith to find out why he can't make the bell ring, perhaps he may find it less difficult to point his gun in the right direction, and I may at the same time do a piece of good Samaritan work for his poor people.

As a feeler, therefore, for the pulse of the patient, I will begin with a little fable of my own construction that I have conceit enough to believe will do better than anything I might dig up from ancient history:

"There was once a bright young green grasshopper, sitting on a big sunflower and watching some crickets on the ground, when he suddenly swelled up with pride, and began to sing, 'Why, I'm the greatest creature living! I'm the greatest creature living!' and with that he gave a jump he thought would turn the whole world upside down with envy, and where do you think he landed?

"Just then a discouraged looking old hen ran up

to a sleek looking turkey gobbler, and in a tone of great anxiety said, 'Sir, did you see a big fat grasshopper pass this way?' and he replied with a gulp, 'No; he stopped!' and as that poor little grasshopper tried to get into a comfortable position in that gobbler's crowded crop, he said to himself, 'What a blithering little fool I was. Why didn't I look before I jumped?'"

And in this little parable we have a luminous page from the history of many lives. So many people leap first, and then in a daze wonder where they have landed, like a man who at a ball game was struck in the head by the ball and knocked senseless. As he came to he said:

"What hit me?"

"A foul," they told him.

"Gee!" said he. "I thought it was a mule!"

The difference between a wise man and a fool is that the wise man did his thinking yesterday, and the fool puts his off until day after to-morrow. If foresight had always been as good as hindsight the millennium would have been here long ago. Much of the trouble there is in the world to-day has been caused by the man who is always biting off more than he can chew.

Mr. Grasshopper was prematurely snuffed out because he was not in earnest. He was dawdling idly on the big sunflower, on which he landed by accident and left by caprice, and was so taken up with the affairs of his neighbors that he wholly neglected his own. He had no business on hand; no definite

object in view. He was not trying to do anything or go anywhere, and so was as much of a loafer as anybody you ever saw cutting splinters on a store box.

Earnestness always does something and tries to get somewhere, whether it is big or little; whether it has one talent or ten, and whether it wears hodden gray or royal purple. It nails its flag to the mast, and does it with nails that clinch. It is back of every Declaration of Independence, and leads in every Revolutionary War.

Look back over history, and see how the pioneers in every good thing have always been men who had iron in their blood. Men who had the determination and the courage to do and dare for the thing that was right, and note also that men with yarn backbones are never found occupying front seats in any hall of fame.

The man who is in earnest can no more be kept back than the days of the week can be kept back, for everybody makes way for the man who knows where he is going, and steps off as if he meant to get there.

You can't hold the earnest man back by putting difficulties and discouragements in his way. You may knock him down, but you can't keep him down, for the next thing you know he will be toeing the scratch and saying:

"I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

Earnestness is like a prairie on fire, for it makes

everything from a grizzly bear to a chipmunk get out of the way. Earnestness takes up the jaw-bone of an ass (when nothing better offers) and goes at the Philistines without waiting to count them. Yes, earnestness does something, and it keeps on doing something even when its hair is gray, like grand old Caleb, who never stopped saying:

"I am as strong this day as I was for war; both to go out and to come in!"

An earnest man will get there—and get there to stay—while his half-hearted brother is putting on his mittens. It was said of Richard Baxter that he would set the world on fire before anybody else could find a match. Somebody said to a man who was too lifeless and listless to shell corn, "How in the world can you tell that you are alive?" and he said, "I sit down on a tack."

I have seen a few preachers in my travels who made me think of that man.

There are men who get on the other side of the township from the bull's-eye mainly through lack of animation in the pulpit. They are good men and clear thinkers, but they seem to have a punctured tire all the time. I don't believe there would be so much unbroken slumber in some churches to-day if the man in the pulpit didn't do so much snoring in his sermons.

When an earnest man looks toward heaven the angels open the windows, and this is true in everything from plowing corn to preaching. One thing I like about a bantam rooster is that you don't need

an alarm clock to get you up in the morning, if you live in his neighborhood, for what he lacks in size he more than makes up for in crow, and he has the spurs to back up his crow. Go to him, thou lymphatic preacher, consider his ways and be wise, and the first thing you know your church will raise your salary.

A very positive cause for the undoing of Mr. Grasshopper was the big sunflower on which we find him. Had he been on some lowly sweet-potato vine his career might have been longer and his story more interesting. He didn't deserve any credit for being on the big sunflower. He didn't climb there, but just flopped to that high place by accident, and it is our climbing alone that counts, not our flopping.

Many people who miss the bull's-eye take great credit to themselves because they didn't miss the big sunflower, but no man deserves any credit for being in any kind of a high place to which he did not climb.

One man is no more entitled to honor because he has blue blood in his veins than another is to dishonor because he has red hair on his head. In neither of these things did he have the casting vote, for they were decided by a big majority long before he got to the polls.

There are people who think that because they were born with a gold spoon in their mouths they are the whole jewelry store, and they swell up like a robin when a sparrow comes his way. Their father was Judge This, or Colonel That, or Dr. Something

Else, but when the fire comes that will make short work of all the hay and stubble, they will find out that the thing that made them feel so chesty was all sunflower.

Others have found themselves lifted high by rich endowment in native ability, and that was the big sunflower that made them too top-heavy to draw a bead on the bull's-eye. They could do hard things as easily as falling off a log, and so they didn't think it worth while to make anything like a strenuous effort for any kind of a task. They just trusted to luck, as the preacher did when his sermons blew out of the window.

Somebody has said that more men fail through lack of push than through lack of talent, a statement that is undoubtedly true, for if the truth were known it would probably be found that people of medium gifts average up better in the matter of accomplishment than those of great ability, for what can be easily done is often neglected altogether, while the man who has to work his passage or walk generally manages to get there.

The world is full of failures because so many able people drift along without incentive or aim, like a boy going to have a tooth pulled, content with simply getting along in the easiest way for the time being, while some near-sighted fellow who hardly knew enough to go in out of the rain walks away with the first prize.

It is the narrow-chested young man, with pale blue eyes, who will be most likely to live a hundred

years, and not the sturdy black-eyed fellow who can lift a barrel of flour. It was Winship, the delicate, saffron-haired little boy that the big fellows bull-dozed, who became the strongest man, not the young Samson that he was so afraid of.

It takes an immense amount of hard picking to tunnel the mountain, but when it is done we may fly on the wings of the wind ever afterward. The man who can see an inch around the corner will not waste much time in looking for an easy place, but will push the hair back out of his eyes and go at something that is avoided by others because it is so hard to do, and he will keep on pegging away at it until he can do it easily.

If everybody could jump over the moon the old cow would not have been praised sky-high for doing it, and gold wouldn't be so precious if it were no harder to mine than it is to dig potatoes. Many a man has failed to hit the bull's-eye because he found it easier to sit in the shade and fan himself than to go out in the hot sun and make the dust fly.

Being born of rich parents, and so never knowing the spur of necessity, has been the big sunflower from which many have gone aimlessly into lives that ended in disappointment and failure for themselves, and shame and tears for those who loved them, for the world has gained more from the hoe-handle than it has from the silver butter-dish. It seldom happens that the man who is born with a gold spoon in his mouth ever sets the world on fire as a goldsmith.

Had Lincoln been the son of a nabob, he might

not have travelled any farther along on the road to fame than the first mile-post. It is the meek who inherit the earth, not the high steppers. The lions and bears are about gone, but the rabbits and doves are here yet. Shoe pegs have done as much for the world as telegraph poles. So let us not make the serious blunder of thinking we are nearer heaven than other folks because we were born up-stairs.

There was no reason for the big jump Mr. Hopper made. He wasn't trying to go anywhere in particular, and wasn't going for anything definite, and there was no special need of his being in such a hurry. Something like that has been the only fault with a great deal of preaching. The sermon was made without any thought of purpose or result. It was nothing more than a shot in the air, like a man-of-war salute. There was no bullet in the gun—nothing to hit with, and no aim taken, and had there been any visible result the preacher would have been amazed.

Two sailors on shore dropped into a church and heard a sermon as polished as a young woman just out of boarding-school.

"How did you like it, Jack?" said one, as they set out for their ship.

"Well, I tell you, messmate," said Jack, as he rolled his quid to the other cheek, as the able seaman always does when he begins a yarn. "It made me think of a whaler just leavin' port for a three years' cruise. Everything on deck was tidy and shipshape; with every rope clean and coiled, but there wasn't any harpoons on board."

And that perhaps is the most common fault with the sermon. There is nothing that takes hold of a man and sticks to him, like burs to the tail of a lamb.

In the days of childhood, that memory holds so dear, whenever the moss-covered bucket was lost in the well, my father would tie a rope to the steelyards, and generally recover it at the first trial, because there were so many hooks the bucket couldn't miss them all. If all our sermons were more like steelyards the devil would probably find it more of an up-hill pull to make prize-fighting pay so much better than preaching. There is certainly something wrong with the sermon that never touches a wrong-doer anywhere.

Sometimes the preacher knows that there is something wrong with him, and sometimes he doesn't, like the man who, when refused for the fourth time by the same girl, said:

"I more than half believe that girl don't want me."

He not only keeps on missing the bull's-eye year after year, but flatters himself that he is improving in his shooting, like the man who at his first shot killed a calf, and at the next a cow. And yet he is as far wrong in his conclusions as was the drunken man who fell into a watering trough on his way home one night, and when a policeman went to his rescue he blubbered out:

"Never mind me, officer; save the women and children!"

Many a man misses the bull's-eye because he is not even snapping a cap in trying to hit it. Another

man knows everything necessary except the essential thing, like the boy who would have been perfect in his spelling lesson but for just one thing; he missed all the words.

That kind of a man can see plainly enough why another can't make the bell ring, but he is as blind as the eye of a potato as to why his own shooting does not disfigure the bull's-eye.

Another reason for the hasty and altogether unpremeditated way in which Mr. Hopper helped the gobbler to an unexpected relish for his breakfast was that he measured himself with the wrong tape-line, and that made him feel so much bigger than he really was that he quickly confirmed the words of Solomon, that pride goes before a fall, by landing in a lower berth in the gobbler's crowded bread basket.

If it were not for the help he gets from vanity the fool-killer would have more blisters on his hands than he has. The devil is putting the butter on the right side of his bread when he gets a self-righteous worldling to put ear-muffs on his conscience and more wind in his lungs by measuring up with the scrawniest specimen of a church member he can find, and he is doing about the same thing when he gets on the blind side of the man in the pulpit, and makes him believe that a white necktie and a long-tailed coat are everything.

It was watching the little crickets on the ground that made the springs in Mr. Hopper's legs work too easily for his good. He was doing exactly what the big sinner does when he looks down on the little saint

in the church. He was planting the right kind of seed to bring him a vigorous crop of whirlwind, with plenty of thunder and lightning thrown in. But for that he would not have made the Carrie Nation kind of move that would inevitably make the hair-trigger of the gobbler's fly-trap do its deadly work. It was because the crickets looked so contemptibly little that he felt so big.

Looking at a tadpole probably makes a frog feel like an ox, and if a spike has feelings, how it must despise a shingle nail. When the bramble put on its crown and set up for king, it was probably looking straight at a little pigweed. One look at a big oak tree would have made it shrink into a toothpick. Had a locust the size of a cucumber chanced to land for a moment on that big sunflower, what a blessing in disguise it might have been to Mr. Grasshopper, for it would have taken the conceit out of him quicker than a shingle can put humility into a sulky boy.

When the spies sent out by Moses came slinking back into camp, and crawling into their tents by the back way, they no doubt felt and behaved like grasshoppers because they had seen some giant breaking fence rails into kindling across his knee.

Instead of standing up alongside of midgets to find out how big we are, it will pay better in practical results to line up with a real giant now and then, and discover how little we are. It is a great misfortune to a preacher never to hear any bigger preaching than he can do himself, for without such opportunity he has a small chance to discover himself.

No man ever lost his place in the procession that is moving toward the persimmon tree by discovering his own insignificance, but many a man has gone through life without raising any dust because he had been deluded into believing himself to be as big as the little boy thought Alexander was.

Size is not the only thing that reaches the home base in the great game of success. Brain can beat muscle every day in the week, and it can do it with its right hand tied behind it. An electric motor little bigger than your fist can run more machinery than a windmill that can be seen a mile.

The monument to the Pilgrim Fathers, at Plymouth, Mass., stands on a pedestal that is so much too small for it that it makes it look as if Mr. Puritan were the only pebble on the beach. Something very much like that was the matter with the grasshopper when it began to preen itself and put on airs over the humble crickets at its feet.

Bishop McIntyre kept the trowel, with which he once worked as a bricklayer, hanging up in his study, and he told me that whenever he began to find himself becoming top-heavy, he would take a good long look at it, and then sit down where he belonged again.

There is a verse in the New Testament that charges every man not to think of himself more highly that he ought to think, and just how much the world may have to lose because many of us do not have something like that trowel, upon which we may sometimes gaze and be reduced to our lowest terms, will perhaps never be known.

Mr. Hopper despised the crickets that were so far below him, and it never got into his green little pate that they might be very good folk in spite of their humble appearance. He would have turned up his nose—if a grasshopper can do such a thing—at the thought of their being able to teach him anything.

A dollar and a penny once happened to come together in a preacher's pocket, and the dollar at once began to put on airs like a red cow in a barn-yard.

"I am a big gun," said the dollar, "and you are a nobody. I am white, and bright, and you are only a dull mud-colored little Indian. I am religious, for I am all the time saying, 'In God we trust,' and you are only a pagan. I am patriotic, for on one side I have the American eagle and on the other the goddess of liberty, and I buy lots of fireworks for the 4th of July. I am heavenly minded too, for I have stars to think about, and you don't have anything. I am precious, for I am nice bright silver, and everybody wants me, but you are only base copper, and nobody cares a snap for you."

"That may all be so," said the poor little penny, in a weak, piping voice. "You may be bigger than I am, and more patriotic than I am, and more religious than I am, and more heavenly minded than I am, but I go to church and Sunday-school a good deal more than you do."

In like manner the grasshopper turned up his nose at the crickets because they were little and black, and felt that it was a mark of his own virtue to despise them, like the "hardshell" sister who said she knew

she was a good Christian because she hated the Methodists so, and this made it easy for Mr. Hopper to discount both the priest and the Levite in the celerity with which he passed by on the other side.

The grasshopper was away over in Missouri in his conclusions because he judged altogether by appearances, and the fellow who does that will always miss it as badly as the old lady did her thimble after her baby grandson swallowed it. Appearances are always deceitful in everything, from a woman's age to a cross-eyed man's intentions, and that is why Satan is still doing an extensive business as a roaring lion. Puddenhead Wilson said, "We ought to be thankful for the fools, for without them the rest of us couldn't succeed at anything."

Another lesson we may learn from the grasshopper is that he had more energy than eyesight, and it is that way with a lot of people.

"Hooray for me!" roared a man as he came reeling down the street with a big jag on. "If I was lightnin' I'd tear up this town without waitin' to thunder."

And it was much that way with the grasshopper. He used his legs too much and his eyes too little, like a preacher who told me that he made six calls before breakfast one morning, and prayed in every house. His ability was not evenly balanced.

If some people would only use their eyes more and their tongues less, what Solons they would be. The most of us are too quick in some ways and too slow in others, like the horse that travelled so much

faster with its hind legs than it did with its forelegs that it had to be hitched up backward to keep it from running over itself. Something like this keeps many very excellent people at the foot of the class. They do too much in the wrong way and too little in the right way, like the Irishman who turned his gas-meter upside down, and claimed at the end of the month that the gas company owed him two dollars.

Mr. Hopper had splendid legs but wretchedly poor judgment. His sparker and his gasoline didn't pull together any better than some churches do. He was controlled altogether by his feelings, like the young mother who allows her first baby to boss her. His conduct depended too much on the amount of grasshopper energy he had in the boiler, and in this respect he was a full brother to a lot of folks who in other respects are very good people.

The next reason for the Absalom-like dispatch with which the grasshopper fell from his brief dream of sunflower splendor was the very same as that which made David's handsome and rebellious son become an easy mark for the fatal darts of rough and gruff old General Joab. The real cause of the rapid snuffing out of both prince and grasshopper was that dangerous swelling of the head which Young America calls "getting chesty," but which Solomon in his more kingly diction pronounces vanity. It is a sad day for a young man when he begins to feel so big that his grandfather's overcoat wouldn't make him a vest.

Nothing under the sun has done any more to help

the fool-killer earn his salary than self-conceit, and nothing else has ever tried to do so big a business on such small capital. When you buy a turkey for your Thanksgiving dinner you don't want to pay anything extra for the gobbler's strut, but the conceited man behaves as if he thought you ought to.

It is said to be impossible to get an elephant to drink from clear water. The reflection of his ugly mug enrages him, and he whips the water into foam with his trunk, and I have often wished that something like that could happen with the conceited man. One good square look at himself would make him mighty sick of himself. Moody used to tell of a man who thought so much of himself that he was always shaking hands with himself. Just as a preacher finished marrying a couple the bride said:

"My first husband was a pretty good sort of a man. I don't know how this here feller will turn out, though he recommends himself very highly."

And that is what self-conceit is always doing. Always recommending itself very highly. Always shaking hands with itself, and patting itself on the head in most complacent approval. Always trying harder to attract attention to itself than the stepmother of a grown-up daughter. Always spreading itself like a green bay tree, and saying with the Pharisee, "I thank thee that I am not as other men!" a somewhat boomerangish fact that everybody is well aware of.

Self-conceit and self-confidence are two very different things, for there can be no success with the

one nor without the other. There is a big difference between self-conceit and self-appreciation, for the man who does not believe in his ability to do the thing he sets out to do will never bring anything to pass. There is a vast difference between feeling assured that we can do some things and thinking we can do everything. Perry reached the North Pole because he believed he could.

The self-conceit that often keeps us from splintering the target of success is that inordinate self-adulation that makes us as blind as a capital I to our own faults, and leads us to unduly magnify whatever we may have in the way of merit. Some preachers never mar the beauty of the bull's-eye, mainly because they are so top-heavy with self-importance they think nobody else can do anything.

And now it is to be hoped that we all understand clearly just why we have missed the bull's-eye—if we have—and as knowledge is power that will both illuminate and run machinery, perhaps we shall all be able hereafter to make the bell ring.

III

CANES AND CRUTCHES

SOON after taking up my residence in a city where I lived several years, I began to be astonished at the number of cripples I saw on the street. It was not at all unusual to see six or eight at one time, limping along with canes or hobbling on crutches. I could not account for this, until one day I learned that one of the local institutions was a large surgical institute, that had its agents out in the byways and hedges compelling the lame and the halt to come in and see what could be done for them.

My attention in this way having been so forcibly drawn to the matter, an impression was made that was lasting, and I have from that time noticed that the limpers and hobblers are a very numerous folk, and that some of them occasionally get into the ministry. The people I had seen on the streets were not lame from choice, but many a preacher is. He limps along on this crutch or that because he thinks it is becoming to him.

The cripples referred to were no more to blame for their canes and crutches and braces than Mephibosheth was for his broken feet, and they were making a hard battle for deliverance from them, but I have

seen ministers who seemed to delight in wearing cork legs in their preaching.

Real cripples are obliged to have help from canes and crutches, and no one will deny that it is better for them to walk in that way than not to walk at all, but the world is full of those who persist in using canes and crutches when they have no more need of them than Noah had for a blind tiger in the ark. The doctors all know that their most exacting patients are the ones who have nothing the matter with them. If anybody in the world ought to be exempt from limping and hobbling, it is the man whose life business it is to tell people how to walk.

The man who speaks for God should himself enjoy the liberty that makes free. He ought to be able to mount up with wings as eagles; to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint. No matter what his gait may be he ought to be as free in it as the flight of a bird. There is a funny inconsistency in preaching against the hobble skirt, if the preacher who does it has to use a manuscript.

When David went out to meet Goliath he left camp on his own feet, and didn't have any crutches under his arm, and in his holy warfare the preacher should be no more trammelled than was the shepherd boy.

"There is a man at the door with a wooden leg," said an office boy to his employer.

"Tell him I don't want any," was the quick reply, and the preacher should be just as prompt to make the same response when any kind of a habit that

carries a crutch under its cloak knocks at his door. He should be as instant in season and out of season about this as he is in his praying or in anything else he does.

There are all kinds of crutches and all kinds of canes, and many of them are so attractive in appearance that some of us almost pray for lameness that we may use them. In fact it is hard to convince some folks that there is not positive advantage in having to limp, as the woman thought who married a man with a cork leg because she liked machinery.

A man told me that he saw this advertisement in a Chicago paper: "Wanted—A man with a Wooden Leg—to mash potatoes in a hotel." Here is a chance for the preacher who has made up his mind to be a stick.

In canes the variety is endless, ranging from the rod of Moses to the modern "Big Stick," and the assortment of crutches from which to choose is just as extensive and no less varied, but this chapter can only deal with a few of the most common among our own ilk.

Perhaps the most widely used and least serviceable walking sticks in vogue among us are preacher mannerisms of various kinds, from the pious whine to the celluloid smile, for it is hard to find a preacher who is not marred by one or more of them. You can cut off a preacher's arm, but you can't keep him from sawing the air with it. It is so easy to fall into wrong preacher habits, and so hard to get out of them, unless the preacher has a wife as relentless as

Jael, and as prompt to send a stake through the heart of every bad habit that tries to hide in his tent.

From the time of Joshua the Jews have known how to steam ram's horns and make them as straight as silver trumpets for religious use, but you can't do anything like that for a preacher who has become all twisted up with mannerisms.

A man who was being examined for a chauffeur's license was asked what he would do in case he should meet a carriage filled with women and children and the team take fright. He scratched his head for a moment, and then said he would take the machine apart and hide the pieces in the bushes, and I want to tell you that would be a snap compared to getting a preacher out of ways in which he has become set.

One of the canes upon which preachers lean and limp as unmistakably as Jacob did when he halted upon his thigh is the preacher tone upon which too many of us depend for producing effect in preaching. Of course there are no preachers in our section who hobble with such crutches, but you can find plenty of them out West.

If that kind of a preacher would speak in the pulpit as he does at home and on the street, and as he does in market when he orders two pounds of porterhouse steak, and tells the butcher just how thick he wants it cut, it would add immensely to the effectiveness of his preaching.

What is the sense of a preacher swelling up in the neck every time he lines out a hymn or reads a Scripture lesson? And why should he use a tone

that sounds as if it came from the bottom of a well when he announces that the "Woman's Home Missionary Society will meet at the home of Mrs. Amos Myers next Thursday afternoon," if he expects any attention to be paid to what he says? And then what is the sense of a preacher standing on his tiptoes, getting red in the face, and yelling as if he were trying to send a message by wireless whenever he wants to put anything in italics?

The lawyer talks to the jury, or he fails to win his case, and the doctor talks to his patient, and why should not the preacher talk to his congregation? Why should he have a special voice that he never uses outside of the church? A voice that he puts on with his Sunday coat? If a preacher were to go into a grocery store and say, in the same tone and manner as that with which he preaches, "Give me six pounds of boneless codfish!" he would be laughed at and set down as either cracked or crazy, and those who heard would feel sorry for him. A visitor to a lunatic asylum sang a comic song to the inmates with a great deal of action, and when he finished an old incurable exclaimed:

"And to think that I'm in and he's out!"

People talk to each other because they have learned by ages of experience that it is the best way to communicate ideas, if they would be listened to with attention. In the old cave-dwelling times they probably yelled and screamed and howled, as young children do in some families and in some churches now, but the preacher is about the only one who has

kept it up. How much better it would be for every one who limps in that way to break his crutch and endeavor to walk in an easy and natural way. But some good brother says:

"I have tried to preach that way, and I can't do it. When I get a-going I lose myself in my subject, and before I know it I am preaching at the top of my voice, or talking with a holy tone."

But no man has a right to lose himself entirely in his subject unless he wants to lose his congregation. The automobile driver loses himself, too, when he is scorching like Jehu, but he is arrested and fined for it. There is no better reason for the preacher allowing his subject to run away with him than there is for the chauffeur letting his machine run away with him.

To remember himself and what he is doing is a large part of the preacher's business, and he must keep a tight rein on himself if he would be up to par in his ministry. So he should keep constantly before him the thought that he is in the pulpit to talk to the people and not to paralyze their ear-drums. He should continually strive to use his voice as it should be used, and not in a way ridiculously different from what God ever intended. A mother said to her little boy at the dinner table:

"Willie, you must use your napkin."

"I am using it, mamma; I've got Towser tied to the table leg with it," said Willie.

And in the use of his voice the preacher sometimes misses it as much as little Willie did. When

the voice is used in the wrong way the effect produced is sure to be far different from what the preacher intends.

A traveller in a new country passed a piece of woods in which he saw a lot of hogs galloping about in the wildest kind of way, like the herd that rushed headlong into the sea. Adjoining the woods the stranger saw a cabin, and hailing an old man who stood in the door, he inquired what ailed his pigs. The old man hobbled out to the fence and in a hoarse whisper said:

"I lost my voice some time ago, and had to call my hogs by pounding on a log with a stick, and now the blame woodpeckers have come and set 'em crazy!"

It will be seen, therefore, that the importance of looking well to the voice and its proper use cannot be exaggerated.

The preacher who would be free from deforming limps along this line should be as attentive to the proper care of his voice as Peter, James and John were to the care of their nets. Noise is not power, though some of us often preach as if we thought it was. An old preacher once said:

"When I first began preaching I thought it was the thunder that killed, and so I tried to make all the noise I could in my preaching, but after a while I found out it was the lightning, and since that time I have tried to thunder less and lighten more."

I saw a poor man some time ago who was in a sad state from locomotor ataxia. His almost lifeless per-

formance was not only pitiable but trying to both the heart-strings and the nerves of those who witnessed it. He had two canes but it was hard to see that they helped him any. We all know how much this is like the effect produced by the man who puts no life into his preaching.

One reason why the march of soldiers thrills us is that they move in quick time, and come down squarely on their heels as if they meant something. Without animation in its delivery the best sermon will be as dead as an Egyptian mummy, and that is about the deadest thing I know of, except some churches.

Some men might add a thousand per cent. to their preaching power if they would only put a little ginger into their manner. There are preachers who talk about eternal things with no more appearance of concern than they would refer to something they had seen in last week's paper.

I once saw "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" played by some country boys and girls in a way that was enough to make Shakespeare come up out of his grave and climb a telegraph pole. When a boy killed his father by hitting him over the head with a beer bottle, the lad whose lines came next said:

"Why, Frank Slade, you've killed your father!" and he said it with no more feeling than he might have said, "Why, Frank Slade, you've dropped a pin!" and we have all heard men preach in that same way.

Our daily papers told us the other day of a man

who had been run over by a hearse. It is to be hoped that he was not a preacher. The preacher should so speak as to compel attention, or stop preaching and go to mending umbrellas. There was once a half-baked kind of preacher whose house was on fire—and you would think that if anything in the world would wake a man up and put a little life into him, it would be to have his house on fire—but this man went down street just as calm and composed as if he were in the pulpit, saying: "Fire! Fire! Fire!" in the same listless way that he would give out a hymn. Of course nobody paid any attention to him, until he met a boy, and the little fellow said:

"Did you speak to me, mister?"

"My house is on fire," said the preacher.

"Great Scott!" yelled the boy; "fire! fire! fire!" and away he went on the run, and in two minutes he raised a commotion all over that end of town and had the fire engines on the gallop for the parsonage.

A preacher who has no more animation than a cold pancake in his preaching is as disappointing as a painted fire in zero weather. The preacher ought never to forget that his attitude and bearing and manner are as certain to give color to everything he says as light is to be tinctured by the glass through which it passes.

"What you are speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say," said Emerson, and what the preacher is either weakens or strengthens his preaching. The way he stands and walks and sits, and the way he carries his hands and his head, can no more be sep-

arated from his preaching than light can be separated from the sun. That is why people always want to see the man to whom they listen. They judge from his looks whether he means what he says.

A crutch that has made sad cripples out of some preachers is a slavish dependence upon mere human wisdom for material out of which to make their sermons. In too many preachers' studies the Bible is about the least used book in it, and I am afraid some of them have no more use for it in their preaching than a nun has for a hat-pin. A preacher in a university town was telling a friend some of his grievances.

"Why," said he, "there seems to be nothing for me to preach about any more. If I undertake to preach on this science or that, there is sure to be a professor from the university right there before me, whose business it is to teach that very thing, and he knows more about it than I do, for he is an expert, who has made it a lifelong study; and so it is with music and art, history and literature, and everything else you can think of. A professor who is an expert is sure to be there to hear me."

"Then why don't you dig into your Bible and become an expert yourself?" said his friend. And right there, brethren, is where some of us run out of gasoline.

In preparing their sermons, there are preachers who go from book to book, and from magazine to magazine, getting one thing here and another there, as a goat finds its dinner, without caring much what

it is or where it comes from. It is sad but true that preachers can be found who make their sermons as a woman does her shopping —

"She wants to buy wool underwear,
The warmest she can get;
But strikes a bargain counter
And gets embroidered net."

They skim the newspapers and drink deep from the Reviews, but keep as far from the Bible as the priest and the Levite did from the half dead man on the Jericho Road. I have sometimes thought that perhaps the main reason why those high church fellows took the other side of the pike was that they had no wine and oil with them on that trip. Sermons that have nothing in them that comes out of the Bible are as far from being what preaching ought to be as was the bride's first cake:

"She measured out the butter
With a very solemn air.
The milk and sugar also, and
She took the greatest care
To count the eggs correctly,
And add a little bit
Of baking powder, which you know
Beginners oft omit.
Then she stirred it altogether,
And she baked it for an hour,
But she never quite forgave herself
For leaving out the flour."

There was once a preacher whose constant practice it was to get his sermons from all over creation,

as a woman does a mess of greens, who one Sunday morning found a card lying on top of the heavy clasped Bible in the pulpit bearing these words:

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

He took the hint, and after getting down on his knees and staying there for a long while, he got down deep in his Bible, and it was not long before his heart was gladdened by finding another card where he had found the first, and this was the inscription it bore:

"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord!"

Some of you have heard how Mr. Moody became the great preacher that he was, and some of you have not. This is the story as I have heard him tell it: He had a young man from England staying in his home, who had been wonderfully taught of God, and who was like Nathaniel in being an Israelite in whom there was no guile. After the stripling had been with Mr. Moody for some time he one day said to him:

"Mr. Moody, I want to tell you something that you don't know. You are preaching a great deal of Moody, but you are not preaching Christ. You have a fine library, and I notice that when you want to make a sermon you get out a lot of books and spread them around you. You get one thing out of this book and another out of that one, but you don't get anything out of the Bible, and so you keep Christ out of your preaching. By doing that, Mr. Moody, you are making yourself a cistern, and God wants you to be a fountain. If you will lock up your books

and let your wife keep the keys for six months, and during that time prayerfully study your Bible, God will make such a fountain out of you that you will not have any trouble about making your sermons."

Moody found the medicine a little bitter, but he had the good sense to see that it was what he needed, and from that time on he became a man of one book, and God did make a fountain of him whose healing waters went all over the earth.

And one reason to-day why some preachers are so weak in their ankle bones that they can't get along without canes and crutches is that they are not Bible preachers. The pastor of a prominent church was once called upon to make the opening prayer on Thanksgiving Day in his own pulpit by the man who was to preach the sermon, and he declined, saying, "I'm not prepared!" and he wasn't, because he got his prayers from Shakespeare and Burns and Kipling and Walt Whitman. Like King Ahaz, the preacher who steers clear of the Bible goes to Damascus for the pattern of his altar.

A preacher whose hobby was total abstinence was being entertained at a table where the sauce happened to be brandied peaches. He ate a dish with so much zest that his hostess easily persuaded him to try another. When that was quickly put out of sight she asked him if he would not have just one more peach.

"No, I thank you," said he, "not any more of the fruit, but I will take a little more of the gravy."

One trouble with some preaching is that it gives you too much of the world's spiked gravy.

I have been entertained in many homes in which I found men who were not churchgoers, and I have asked them why? They have been almost unanimous in telling me that it was because they did not get anything worth while when they did go.

"If I could only be sure," many a man has said to me, "that I would get something out of the Old Book that father and mother used to go to in time of trouble, I would be there every Sunday, but if I have to be doped with a lot of stuff the preacher gets out of his books and magazines, I prefer to stay at home, where in my easy chair I can read something that will interest me much more."

One of our church papers recently contained a letter from a preacher who said that he had a library of several hundred volumes, and yet he felt that he had been handicapped in his ministry by not having been able to afford one two or three times as large. Perhaps so, but more likely his ministry would have meant more in heaven had he not had so many books.

I am not saying anything against a preacher being well read, if he is also well read in his Bible, but if he is so taken up with other books that he has no time to feed on the word of God, he is certain to be a lame man in his ministry, and the sad fate of another good but misguided man may be his. Hear this:

"And Asa was diseased in his feet, yet in his

trouble he went not to the Lord; but to the doctors. . . . And Asa slept with his fathers."

No other wisdom can make up for ignorance of what God says. The early Methodist preachers were men of power largely because they knew their Bibles, and preached what they found in them. When the preaching is the very essence of what God says, God Himself is the preacher, and those who hear are not long in finding it out.

A preacher was at work in his study when his little five-year-old tot walked in and said:

"What are you writing, papa?"

"A sermon," he told her.

"How do you know what to write, papa?"

"God tells me," he said.

"Then what makes you scratch it out?" she asked, as she climbed up on his lap and looked at his manuscript, and it is doing that very thing that makes some of us limp so much in our preaching.

I don't think I ever saw an audience inattentive when the preaching was coming out of the Bible, and we all know that nothing will so quickly awaken a sleepy congregation as a Bible illustration. A Scripture lesson well read is always heard with breathless attention.

George Mueller, the man of such monumental faith that in answer to his prayers millions of dollars were put into his hands, was practically a man of one book, for all the volumes in his library at the time of his death could have been placed on a shelf four feet long, and yet he was so great in his preach-

ing that masters in Israel were glad to sit at his feet.

Dr. A. T. Pierson, his biographer, declared him to have been the greatest preacher he ever heard, and of his preaching Dr. Sawtell, chaplain to British and American sailors at Havre, France, wrote to Dr. Francis Wayland, of this country:

"For three Sabbaths I sat under his teachings, and heard him twice each day. Though he invited me to preach for him I declined, for the very reason that I could not afford to lose the precious opportunity of hearing him. The results of his method of preaching are seen in the numbers of men and women connected with his church who have become mighty in the Scriptures, and are better qualified to expound them, and to guide inquiring souls to Christ than many a young minister who has spent his three years in a theological seminary. Let no one imagine that this kind of preaching becomes dry and heavy.

"Never have I listened to more burning words and touching eloquence than occasionally burst from the lips of this man of God, and especially when he turned to the young, and with all the tenderness and pathos of a loving father, plead with them to 'seek now the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.' I doubt whether I shall ever see his like again this side of heaven. If I am not a better man in future, possessing more of the spirit of Christ, more faith, more of the spirit of prayer and of holy living, for having spent three weeks at his feet, surely my case is a very sad one indeed."

George Mueller was pastor of one church for sixty-six years—the longest term on record—and preached up to the day of his death. Here is something for men who are afraid of the dead line to think about. He lived to be ninety-three years old, and read the Bible through more than 200 times.

A crutch that often makes a lame man out of one who might run through a troop and leap over a wall is a slavish dependence upon notes in preaching. Had Simon Peter used manuscript the chances are that somebody else would have been divinely commissioned to do the preaching on the day of Pentecost. If there is anything that will throw more of a damper over the average congregation than to have the preacher pull out a big thick manuscript, it would be hard to decide what it is.

I doubt if anything will make the preacher more natural and effective than the habit of never taking a scrap of paper into the pulpit with him. This practice persevered in will result in his making his outlines so clear and simple as to be easily carried in the mind.

Preaching without notes also has the advantage of permitting a more direct and definite aim, and the man who fires any kind of a shot ought at least to know the township in which it is likely to strike before he pulls the trigger, or his gunning may be like that of the hot-headed young tourist —

> "Who saw a deer; blazed at it hot;
> The hasty charge went wide.
> But though he failed to guide the shot —
> Poor man—he shot the guide!"

Having to follow the typewritten page will also sometimes put the preacher in the same kind of a straight-jacket as the young rector found himself in when a baby next door fell into the cistern, and its frantic mother shrieked to him for help. Without waiting to put on his canonicals, he grabbed up his prayer-book, and scorched over its pages until he struck the " Prayer for a Safe Return From Sea."

When a speaker talks entirely without notes he is not held down like a captive balloon. The people see that he is not dependent upon any visible helps, and will greatly help him with their sympathy and good will, but how quick they will put up the shutters against him when they have to wait for him to thaw out his pemmican. Folks want to be talked to, and will lean forward to help the talker.

It is undoubtedly better to forget some things we planned to say than to run the risk of having the magnetic cord of sympathetic interest broken by reading instead of speaking. And then the chances are that the things we forget will never be missed by those who hear, and something much more telling may be said, as once happened with Father Taylor, the old-time preacher to sailors. He became so entangled in a long sentence that kept on growing and growing, like a runaway scene in a moving picture, until at last he had to stop and say :

" Brethren, I don't exactly know where I went in in beginning this sentence, and I don't know where I am going to come out, but I do know that I am bound for the kingdom of heaven ! "

If we will persevere in a determination to preach without notes we will stop forgetting. The postal clerk is compelled to remember the location of post-offices, and the best way for mail to reach them, and so develops what seems to be a phenomenal memory, and something like that is sure to come from extemporaneous preaching. To be compelled to remember is the surest way known to have a good memory.

In preparing to preach without notes the thoughts will be more firmly riveted together by associations that will become stronger and stronger with practice, until they will hold like a sailor's knot and not slip, as they will when the only hope of being able to walk through the duty of the hour depends altogether on a written outline. The plan of the sermon will become more simple, and there will be a thread of logical connection that will keep its tension all the way through. This will strengthen the preaching too, for what is spoken carries with it the conviction that it is something the preacher knows, and not something he has found all ready prepared, like Battlecreek breakfast food.

A grocery clerk was trying to sell a lady a new article in that line, and his strongest argument in its favor was that it was predigested food, and she instantly inquired:

"And by whom?"

I was told of a church where, inside of a year, three visiting preachers all preached the same sermon, and one of them was the presiding elder. Those who

heard them all might well have asked the same question.

Many a lawyer who has all the law and most of the evidence on his side loses his case because the opposing counsel gets so close to the jury that they believe everything he says, and for the preacher to get close to his congregation by talking to them is more than half the battle. Before the people will be very much moved toward any definite course of action by the sermon, they must be brought to full sympathetic trust in the preacher, and nothing will insulate against this like finding out that he has to depend on fly tracks on a sheet of paper for his inspiration.

If a preacher simply wants to reach the heads of his hearers it may be all right for him to do his preaching with a goose-quill, but if he aims at the heart he will come closer to it without any paper wadding. I was once at a camp-meeting where this prayer was made at the beginning of the evening service on Sunday, by an old preacher who believed in opening his mouth and giving the Lord a chance to fill it, the morning sermon having been from manuscript:

"O Lord, save us from these sermons that are brought here out of ice boxes. Lord, how can you scald a hog in ice-water?"

And he went on for ten minutes in the same strain. That same kind of a prayer is continually going up from many hearts in many churches, though it may not find expression in such barbed-wire language.

A preacher with manuscript is like a bird with a broken wing. No matter how much he may long to soar he is kept close to the ground, and cannot go where he would. In a shot at a wild turkey an old hunter merely broke its wing, and as it ran into the brush and escaped him, he looked after it in disappointment, and growled out:

"Well, I didn't git you, but you'll never roost ez high ez you want to agin!"

Before the average congregation the preacher with a manuscript is no better off than was that poor turkey. There is something in preaching that can only go from heart to heart through the eye, and this is lost when the sermon is written and read, and that is why so many would rather hear an ordinary talker than a good reader.

Dr. Richard S. Storrs, who was great with a manuscript, and who preached altogether in that way for more than twenty-five years, then became a fine extemporaneous speaker and never returned to reading, said:

"I verily believe that the kingdom of God advances more on spoken words than it does on essays written and read; on words, that is, in which the present feelings of the teaching mind break into natural and forceful expression."

Certainly Dr. Storrs was never able to get as high with his manuscript as he wanted to go, and the fact that after so many years of unsatisfactory labor he sought and found what he gladly declared to be a better way, ought to cause the young minister to

hesitate before he becomes wedded to a manuscript, for a divorce from it may not be an easy matter when he begins to shed the bitter tears of repentance.

Probably the best things in any sermon are the sudden flashes of thought not dreamed of before, the happy inspirations of the moment, heaven-born for the occasion. We can all remember how some of the most telling and effective things we have ever said came to us as illuminations, and never could have been thought out and prepared beforehand.

If the preacher is certain that he was born with a twist that makes it absolutely necessary for him to use manuscript, then perhaps it may be all right for him to keep his inkhorn by his side, but he ought to be a live wire when he comes to read his sermon. There is only one thing worse than poor preaching, and that is poor reading. Poor reading in the pulpit is inexcusable.

It is a great mistake to rest your chin on your wish-bone, if you want your sermon to reach anybody in your congregation. The top of the head is far less attractive in appearance and expression than the average countenance, and should never be shown by bending over the reading desk. If the paper is held in the hand—as it always should be if the reader cannot see it clearly without stooping—it should be as much a part of the man as the sword is of the soldier. The clumsy handling of paper is distracting and annoying to most people. Care should also be taken to have the face in a good light, for obvious reasons.

But no matter what kind of canes and crutches we use, or how poorly we use them, let us prayerfully endeavor to walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called, and study to show ourselves approved unto God as workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, whether we do it with a fountain-pen, a typewriter or the jaw-bone of—a man with fire in his bones.

IV

SERMON PREPARATION

IT ought not to be a difficult matter for the preacher to find a subject upon which to preach. If he is faithful in his pastoral work, and doesn't simply talk about the weather in his calls, he ought to have subjects crowding upon his attention as office seekers throng the corridors of the White House. He will find, as he gets his finger on the pulse of his congregation, that some of his people are worldly, others indifferent, others insincere, others malicious, others unforgiving, and others censorious, unrighteous and uncharitable.

Still others he will find who are distrustful, and not to be counted upon for anything. He will find some who are buffeted with doubt, some who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, some who are anxious to learn the right that they may do it, and some who want to be Christians, and would be if they could only learn how to make a start.

And there will be others who want to be whole-hearted spiritual people, who are making little headway for lack of a little practical help on how to take up proper Bible study. Others the preacher will find who would soon become splendid church workers, with a little wise direction about how to begin. He will also find others, and many of them, too, who

would become great givers if they were only shown how to give in a way to learn the blessedness of it, and knowing all these things about the people to whom he preaches, it would seem as if the preacher need not scratch out much hair in trying to hit on something to preach about.

When a doctor learns that his patient has a headache and cold feet, with hot flashes and icy streaks chasing each other up and down his spine, along with a pain in his side and a buzzing in his ears, together with a bad taste in his mouth and a clammy feeling about his flesh, it looks to a layman as if that doctor ought to be able to shut his eyes and take something out of his medicine case that would hit something or other in that sick man. And yet there are cases on record of where a preacher has for years been giving heavy doses of everything he could think of without appearing to make things any better or worse.

"I declare," said a young doctor, with a bewildered look, "I can't think what made that baby die, for I gave it all the drugs I knew the names of," and doing that very same thing is all that ails some otherwise strong preaching.

In preparing a sermon the first thing necessary is, of course, the choosing of a subject and a text. Some decide on a subject first, and then hunt up a text to suit it, just as the young man who buys a necktie at the bargain counter tries to find a pair of socks that will match it in radio-activity, while others first choose a text and then find their subject in it, as a

woman prepares a dinner from the contents of the grocer's basket.

To be sure it depends altogether on the man and what he hopes to accomplish, as to which is the better method, just as it depends upon whether a farmer is going to chop wood or make hay, as to whether he would better take an ax or a pitchfork.

There are preachers who can preach for an hour without having either a subject or a text, and sometimes they keep it up for years, and there are others who can take any text in the Bible and give you more surprises in what they get out of it than you ever found at a ten-cent store.

With many preachers, however, the choosing of a text is the hardest part of making a sermon, for when they once get a good text the sermon almost makes itself. Some ministers find it a great help to keep a garden for growing sermons, as others do for growing vegetables. They have a place where they plant ideas, and have subjects incubating all the time. There are many ways of doing this, but here is a simple plan that may help somebody to make a better one:

Provide a number of large envelopes, made of good paper that will stand the wear, and whenever a text or a subject makes an impression upon you, note it on the outside of an envelope, and you will have planted a germ from which a sermon will grow. Then afterward, whenever a thought comes to you on that subject, jot it down on a slip of paper, and put it in the envelope.

As you read the newspapers, clip everything that will make a good illustration, or throw light on your subject, and put such clippings in the envelope. A memorandum of serviceable matters found in books and magazines should be placed in the envelope, telling where they may be found.

Collateral texts and illustrative material found in the Bible should also be noted in the same way. By this means the preacher will be continually accumulating the very best kind of material on a number of subjects, and will at the same time be forming a systematic habit of thinking and working that will be of lifelong benefit.

It was Moody's practice to prepare his sermons in this way, and when engaged in a meeting he would have a trunk half-full of such material with him.

If you have nothing in mind when the time comes to begin the preparation for your sermon, looking over texts on which you have accumulated some ideas and material is likely to result in the mind taking hold of something that will soon begin to open up to you. When this is the case look at it from all sides, as a Kentuckian would examine a horse. Hold it before your mind's eye until you have seen all there is in it for you, and then if it still satisfies your mind and quickens your heart, be of good courage, for you have found a good subject on which to preach.

Thoughtful and prayerful brooding upon the theme thus decided upon is bound to give you a message that God will use. As you engage in deep and pro-

longed meditation on the subject, there will come out of the hidden recesses of your mind all you may know that has a bearing on it. Close and thoughtful attention will do for you what the search-light does in the mine. It will discover and bring into view great stores of hidden treasure.

It is well to break up the text and get out of it all you can with your own hammer, before you seek any help from the material you may have in your envelope, jotting down briefly, or fixing clearly in the mind the points you discover.

After this has been done you can refer to your accumulated material with profit, for it will not then supplant or smother your own thought, but may give you good suggestions that you can work out in your own way, and they will bear the stamp of your own individuality.

As you thus go on reflecting and turning things over in your mind, ideas will begin to shape themselves in an orderly way, and the dominating parts of your plan will come into view, like land rising out of the sea.

It is well to get into the habit of avoiding complexity in your outline, for the simpler you can make it the better attention your preaching will have, and the more of the sermon will be carried away by those who hear it. Endeavor to have your outline as simple in design as a two-foot rule if you would be heard with interest and profit.

A simple outline is easily understood, and no harder to follow than a load of hay. The Truth is

more likely to accomplish its purpose and not return void when it is so clearly and simply presented that it can be understood. A preacher was sent for to visit a man who was quite deaf, and on arrival he said:

"What induced you to send for me?"

"What's he say, wife?" asked the deaf man.

The old lady braced her feet and shouted in his ear:

"He says, 'What the deuce made you send for me?'"

There was too much complexity, don't you see, and that is often the trouble with some otherwise good preaching. Had the preacher simply said: "What do you want?" he would have found out in the next breath.

There is no use in putting any more wheels on a cart than are needed, and the same is just as true of a sermon plan. The nearer truth is stripped to the buff the more certain it is to be recognized. High-heeled shoes, false hair and store clothes only mislead and confuse.

Every unnecessary syllable added to an expressive word puts cotton in the ears of somebody. Our Lord was gladly heard by the common people, because He talked so that they could understand Him. It didn't take a theologian to comprehend what He said. So it is well for the preacher to aim toward simplicity in his sermon plan if he would be on the safe side.

A little boy can look at the running gears of a wagon and carry the whole thing in his mind, but it takes a mechanician to comprehend an automobile.

If we would make our preaching as simple as boiling eggs, we would have more intelligent attention paid to what we say in the pulpit.

It is a good plan to make as much of your preparation as possible by intense and careful thinking, without putting the result on paper, for what you write will not come back to you while speaking with the force and freshness of the things you think out verbally. Making a preparation in that way will fix it in the mind in a much more definite and indelible way.

Making a written preparation too often trammels the preacher in his delivery by his mind vaguely trying to recall what he has written. The minister who can form the habit of making his preparation while walking or taking other manual exercise will do a great thing for himself, for he can then be building his sermon wherever he is.

This was Beecher's habit. He spent much time in walking about the streets, and mingling with the people in the stores, and wherever he went he gathered sermon material as a bee does honey.

Bodily exercise, and especially walking, has a highly stimulating influence over the brain. Gladstone found that he could do his best thinking while chopping down trees, and Lincoln made some of his speeches while splitting rails. The fact that John the Baptist lived on locusts and wild honey, and not on theological breakfast food, shows that he must have taken plenty of outdoor exercise.

The old-time circuit rider prepared his sermons

while walking and riding from place to place, and mingling with the people. One reason why they were full of vim was because they were made in the open air, often preached in the open air, and to people who lived in the open air.

Some of us would no doubt do better preaching to-day if we did not so often have to speak in churches where the same air is kept bottled up all winter long, and to so many people who spend the most of their lives in the same kind of an atmosphere. A man with six small children said:

"It's the little things that count."

A minister who was spending a few days with a preacher friend of prominence asked him how he prepared his sermons.

"I'll show you when I go at my next one," he was told.

A day or two passed without anything being done toward making a sermon. Then the visitor became a little nervous lest he miss his lesson, and intimated as much.

"Well, I guess we'll make a start on it some time to-day," returned his host.

But instead of being asked to go to the study, an hour or two later he was invited to take a walk. They started out, and soon came to where some men were working on the foundation of a house. They stopped for a little chat, and then went on until they came to a store, where they went in and watched a skillful clerk sell a big bill of goods to a farmer's wife.

After this they started on again, and soon came

to a heavy load of brick that had been brought to a standstill in the street by a balky mule. The driver was thrashing the mule, and swearing and sweating like a prophet of Baal.

The next incident of the walk was a stop at a vacant lot to watch some boys playing ball, and then they went to a livery barn and put in a little time in seeing a black man clip a horse, and then as they turned toward home the street was thrown into a commotion by a team running away.

It was nearly dinner time when they reached the house, and the visiting brother wondered why the other had frittered away so much time. But while they were resting on the veranda, the preacher, who had promised to explain his method of making a sermon, showed his guest how he had already found the backbone and most of the ribs.

The foundation for the new house had given him his theme, which was "Character Building." Three or four texts were named, either of which would do. The clerk selling the bill of goods had suggested the first rib, which was plan or purpose, without which no building of any kind can be done. The sole aim of the clerk had been to succeed in the task he had assigned himself, and all his ability and skill were put into the effort. To build character you must be just as definite, determined and alert.

The wagon-load of brick furnished another good rib. To build you must have proper material and plenty of it, and get it on the ground in good shape, and by the time wanted.

Point for a side train of thought—If you have a balky will, get rid of it and find a better. The balky mule also suggested how our main dependence will often fail us, as Job's wife did her patient husband, and the swearing and sweating of the driver shows the awful waste there can be in misdirected effort.

Point No. 2 for a side train of thought—The devil always agrees with the man who thinks he can put on a hair shirt and turn himself into a saint. The boys playing ball showed the necessity of being in earnest if you would have a good time, and make things go with a hum. Also the importance of beginning early. Clipping the horse made the preacher remember that we must strip for the work we undertake, and give up the things that are against our success, even if the cold iron does touch us where we live.

The runaway was a reminder that the unexpected is certain to happen, and was also a warning to always take wise precautions to prevent it or to meet it, for it was learned that had the team been properly hitched there would have been no runaway.

This shows how sermons may be found everywhere, if we will only learn how to put out our hands and take them up. By further brooding over those same incidents, it is not unreasonable to believe the prolific minded preacher might have brought out still other sermons on other themes.

Conversing with others on the subject on which preparation is being made will not only clarify, but freshen and stimulate the thinker's own mind. Web-

ster laid great stress upon conversation as one of the most important sources of imagery as well as of positive knowledge. He said he had learned much more by talking with some authors than he had ever been able to learn by reading their books. It is also a good plan to have every man you talk with tell you something you do not already know.

The preacher should also endeavor to have his sermon as naturally progressive as a politician's ambition. Let it be first the blade, then the stalk, then the ear, and the ripe corn in the ear. It should be so arranged that one part will naturally open into another, as the door of one room opens into the next, and so on in regular order, until the end is reached.

By such a progressive arrangement of thought the speaker is carried easily forward, his faculties have continued liberty, and he is not forced to pause in the work of addressing himself directly to the people. The best way to do this, every man must learn very largely from his own experience, though the experience of others may be valuable to him for what it may give in practical suggestion.

Another man's way often shows us how we may improve our own, but we have to work out details and results each in his own way. The way that works best with him is the plan each man will be certain to follow, and there would be something wrong with his head if he didn't. In answer to the question of some one seeking his counsel, John Bright once made this reply:

"Divide your subject into not more than two or

three main sections. For each section prepare an 'island'—by this I mean a carefully prepared sentence to clinch your argument. Make this the conclusion of the section, and trust yourself to swim to the next island. Keep the best island for the peroration, and then sit down."

Some of us will no doubt remember how in our first efforts at sermon preparation we had islands enough to make an archipelago, with swimming enough to tire out a whale, and all because we feared we should not have material enough to occupy the time if we went into the pulpit with any less. To review some of those skyscraper outlines to-day would make us feel as the old farmer did the first time he saw a camel, and cried out:

"What's the matter with me? There can't be no such thing!"

But whatever method may be used, it is of great importance that the main plan of the sermon should from the beginning be so clearly in view that it comes up of itself when needed, without having to be pulled into sight by a special effort.

Care should be taken to have sufficient subordinate trains of thought to aid in unfolding and developing the subject. Have in mind images and illustrative instances, and whatever may be needed to set forth and enforce the theme. Never allow yourself to be ruled by them, however, as many a fond mother is by her little children. Be careful always to keep yourself so free from bondage to them that if passed you will not have to go back and reproduce them.

Have plenty of thoughts before your mind, but let them come to your lips as they will, and if they don't come, let them go. It will not pay to risk losing your train by going out on the platform to pick up an apple dropped from the car window.

Thoughts that have been hammered into tangible shape by meditation and reflection are never lost. They may fail to come just where you intended to use them, but they will come again at some other time, and perhaps when more needed, as did Webster's famous drum-beat inspiration, and meantime others, which are very likely better, will come in their stead, and bring a brood of others with them, like turkeys coming home in the fall.

The preacher will find it an advantage to form the habit of doing his thinking in words to a considerable extent, for the thoughts that have a body are the most likely to live. If it is your habit to do much of your thinking in language, you will have little trouble in thinking on your feet before an audience. A thought is bound to be hazy and nebulous in the mind of a thinker so long as he does not make it dress itself in proper garb and stand up in the light where it can be seen. The cause of muddy speaking is muddy thinking. As three men were going out of church they fell to discussing the preacher.

"I never in my life heard a preacher who could dive so deep into the truth as Dr. Blank does," said the first.

"Nor stay under longer," remarked the second.

"Or come up drier," said the third.

And all no doubt because the unfortunate man had fallen into the habit of doing his thinking in nebulous abstractions that it would take a book like an algebra to express. So try to form the habit of verbal thinking, young man, if you would have a style as clear as crystal. A colored man said:

"I suah is glad dat when de Lo'd dun made de possum He didn't fo'got to put a tail on it fo' me to cotch it by."

And putting a thought in words is giving it a tail to "cotch it by," so that it cannot escape you. We would all speak well if we could only get up and say in telling words just what we know. When we hear another say a thing well, we often find ourselves thinking:

"Why, I knew that myself. Why have I never been able to express it as well as he?"

It is more than probable that if in our meditation and deep thinking we were in the habit of putting our thoughts in clear and expressive language, that an imaginary person would readily understand, we should be able to give an interesting and clear expression to our thoughts before an audience. In considering how to make ourselves understood by others, we will make the matter more clear and vivid to our own minds.

Habitually putting thought in words will not only cultivate the power to extemporize, but will greatly aid in concentrating thought, and keeping the mind at work on the task before it.

And yet in preparing a sermon that is to be spoken, there should be no intention of preaching in

the same language in which the thinking has been done. No effort whatever should be made to commit the language by which you have expressed your thoughts to yourself. Have the thought clearly pounded out and fixed in the mind by having looked at it from all sides, and its expression can be safely left to the time of speaking. Trust this task to the mind with the fullest confidence, and it will not disappoint you.

The preacher should have a distinct and very positive sense of the importance of the particular subject upon which he is about to preach—which of course he has chosen with prayer, and wants to use with power. He should have a conviction that God has given him a message for that very hour, and that the truth he is about to declare will not return to him void. It may seem to be a very ordinary and unimportant message, having in it little to edify and enlighten, but he must not forget that God sometimes takes a very little worm to thrash a mighty big mountain.

The rod of Moses was no more than any other until the power of God was put into it, and then it was greater than Pharaoh and all his host. The mantle of the Carmelite was nothing in itself, but when Elisha took it up and in the full assurance of faith smote the river in the name of the Lord, expecting something to happen, something did happen, and so the preacher should always count upon the power of the Almighty to back up and make effective the humblest effort he may put forth.

Before Jesus said, "Go and do my work," He also said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go and do, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." And in saying this He meant that He would put all needful power into the effort of the man who was faithful in doing His will, whether he did great things or little ones. And whether he fights with a lath or a Damascus blade, the preacher should always expect to win when he undertakes in the name of the Lord.

So every time you take an arrow from your quiver, and fit it to your ministerial bowstring, take it for granted that it will find its way to somebody's vitals, even though you may feel that it is about the poorest thing of the kind ever made. Expect something to happen because the Lord has promised that His word shall accomplish something wherever it goes.

It is well to make sure, however, that it is the Lord's word you are giving in your sermon, and not simply your own notion of things, for many a preacher spoils the bread of life with oleomargarine of his own make. God's word in a sermon is the best thing that can be put into it, and yet some preachers fight as shy of it in their preaching as the platform of a political party does of everything that can by any possibility offend a barkeeper or a brewer.

"There isn't fat enough about that fellow to grease a watch," said a man with billygoat whiskers, as he looked at the living skeleton in a side-show, and we all know that some high-priced sermons are being

preached in which the recording angel couldn't find enough of the marrow of the word to look at. But when the preacher has conscientiously and faithfully put into his preaching what he knows to be the word of his God, he can be sure that the power of God will be in his preaching.

So gird up the loins of your faith, and count upon the hand of the Lord being in your ministry when you are doing something that seems to be poor and little, just as much as when you feel quite certain you are walking off with the gates of Gaza. To note what preaching has done for the world, and at the same time reflect that the most of it has been no better than our own, is to have the conclusion inevitably forced upon us that the miracle of the loaves and fishes has been repeating itself from the day the fragments were gathered up until now.

So we should never be tempted into discouragement or half-hearted effort because the sermon we have prepared seems to fall so far short of what we want it to be. We are to do our prayerful best, and count on results, whether we can see them or not. It is certainly as necessary that the preacher shall preach by faith as that the just shall live by faith.

So let us not dishonor our Master and discount the truth we preach by expecting nothing to happen, just because we may not feel like Jehu in his chariot while delivering the sermon. Whenever we shell the woods with gospel shot we should take it for granted that somebody will have to go to the hospital, whether we ever know anything about it or not.

Sometimes a good illustration, even when poorly given, may do more than a large and careful development of doctrine well presented. A portrait of a Bible character, or any trait of it, may accomplish more than the elaboration of a precept or a lengthy argument, or a well-given exposition of a prophecy. What seems the least may be the mightiest if it has the push of God's Spirit behind it. It doesn't take a steel girder to draw a flash from the battery. The point of a needle will do it.

Always remember, therefore, that the special truth you are to present has importance in itself, when fulfilling that for which it was designed, and your message may be God's means for accomplishing the result toward which your entire labor is tending, and then give your mind and soul to it, as if no other subject existed. Be of one idea until your sermon is ended, and let that idea be the one before you.

No sermon should ever be preached in a way that does not tell everybody who hears it exactly which side of the question under consideration the preacher is on. There should never be any doubt about that, though sometimes there is. A suffragette at Denver took her little girl to church with her one Sunday morning. At the close of the sermon the little one put her face up close to her mother's and whispered:

"Mamma, is he for God or against Him?"

We smile at that, but wouldn't it be dreadful to have anybody go away asking themselves a similar question after hearing one of our sermons? No mat-

ter what the subject may be, or how able its presentation, the sermon will be a failure if anybody has to leave the church without being convinced that what the preacher has said is what he honestly believes.

From the beginning to the close of the sermon there should be no uncertain sound. Through voice, and manner, and look, and the words spoken, the preacher's faith should ring out like that of the old prophet when he told his servant to go again and look toward the sea. It should be convincingly evident that the man of God is doing his best to give what he honestly believes to be the word of God. If the preacher is not a man of faith his doubts will affect his people like contagion, for it is a law of the mind that what we *are* always speaks much louder than what we say.

> "Thou must thyself be true,
> If thou the truth wouldst teach.
> Thy soul must overflow,
> If thou another soul would reach.
> It takes the overflow of heart
> To give the lips full speech."

To safeguard against having anything like an uncertain note in his message, the preacher should prayerfully endeavor to have constantly with him in his preparation a sense of the personal presence of the Master. If we could but realize that Jesus Himself is with us as certainly as He was with the two disciples on their walk to Emmaus, and that He will

hear the sermon when we come to preach it, how differently we would prepare, and how much more effectively we would preach. Nothing can put the power of God into our preaching like an unbroken consciousness of the presence of Him whom we preach.

In an address I heard some time ago, the speaker told of a mother who paid an unexpected visit to her son in college. He showed her the buildings and grounds with a great deal of enthusiasm, and then she said:

"Now show me your room. I want to see where you live."

He complied, but with ill-disguised hesitation and embarrassment. The mother found the room looking as if it were trying to give the college yell. The walls were decorated with ball bats, tennis rackets and other athletic paraphernalia, and in addition to these were some pictures that it pained her mother's heart to find there. She was a very sensible mother, however, and did not give her boy the lecture he knew he deserved. Soon afterward she sent him a box of things from home, some of which she knew would make decorations for his room he would be glad to have, and among them was a copy of Hoffman's boy Christ.

Some weeks later the mother again paid her college boy a visit, and this time was gladly taken to his room at once. The first thing she saw as she entered the room was the Christ picture she had sent, just opposite the door. As she looked about

the room she noted that the ball bats were still there, and all the other athletic decorations were there, just as they had been, but the fancy pictures were all gone. She asked what had become of them, and he said:

"Mother, they didn't fit in with Him, and I took them down."

This shows how a sense of our Master's presence in our preparation and preaching would be certain to exalt and sanctify our ministry. It would compel the keeping out of everything that did not fit in with Him. All unworthy ambition, and all unholy motive, and all vainglorious effort would have to go.

It will also greatly help us in our preparation to remember that the Lord has use for every kind of a man, just as He had use for everything from goats' hair to gold in the building of the tabernacle, or He would not have made so many kinds of men, and our kind may not be so common as we think.

So we may take courage and be grateful that we do not have to be able and brilliant and great in the sight of men to be vessels meet for the Master's use. In the building of a great house more shingle nails are used than spikes. The Lord does not need great gifts from us, but He does want our individuality.

Edison tried eighteen hundred experiments with various substances before he could find anything that would produce the incandescence in the electric light, and then he found it in a soiled piece of cardboard under his feet, after having sent to the ends of the earth for things to experiment with.

One of the most effective of all personal powers is personality. The stone from which Michael Angelo carved his great statue of David was taken from a rubbish pile where it had lain for years.

The Lord had a use, and a great one, for the impulsive, self-willed and impatient Simon Peter, as well as for the sensitive and spiritual John. For Luke, with his masterly skill in narrative, as well as for Paul, with his immense dialectic force. He has offices and services for each of us, whether we have one talent or many. What He wants is that we shall use to the uttermost limit every power we possess. A sense of His personal presence with us, therefore, will make us more natural and individual. It will keep us from wanting to be too much like Brother Smith or Dr. Jones in our preaching.

Emphasis should be put upon the importance of doing our best work on the conclusion of the sermon. We should plan for that with all the skill possible, and see that there are no big holes in that part of the net for the fish taken to wriggle through. Nine men out of ten break down right there. They do well in the beginning and middle of their sermons, but in the conclusion they are like a gun that hangs fire until after the aim is lost. They are splendid in driving nails, but forget to clinch them. To make our preaching effective, therefore, we should strive to have the conclusion so clear and convincing that conviction and decision will be inevitable on the part of those who hear.

V

THE PREACHER'S BARREL

I ONCE knew a man who had a box at home into which he would put all manner of odds and ends he found when taking his daily walks, and then when he had to repair anything about the house he would go to his box and generally find the very thing he needed. A somewhat similar brain habit would be a good thing for every preacher. In the accumulation of serviceable material there is nothing like a close and thoughtful observation for finding and putting away things that will be sure to come handy after a while.

In this way much that is of practical value will not only be acquired, but skill in its use will be developed, just as the young wife, who at first could not prepare much of a meal with a whole grocery store to help her, can after a few years' experience get up a good dinner from that which would have found its way into the garbage in her young housekeeping days. Material to fill libraries is lying all about us, as some of our mineral and chemical resources have so long done, because so many are like Peter Bell:

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him —
> And it was nothing more."

In Niagara Falls some see beauty, and glory and God. Others see nothing but water. The preacher who is able to look below the surface will find sermons in stones, books in running brooks, and good in everything, because he has been taught to see what folks in general cannot see.

"The poem hangs on the berry bush
When comes the poet's eye,
And the whole street is a masquerade
When Shakespeare passes by."

The filling of the barrel should always be going on, and with watchful care and discernment the thoughtful preacher may be easily able to put something into it every day, if it becomes a fixed habit with him to do it. He will scratch around here and there, as the young chicken does, and when night comes he will have something to show for it.

By close observation the preacher will be continually borrowing gold, jewels, goat's hair and badger skins which will serve a good turn in building the tabernacle of a successful ministry. Here are some of the things he will find and put away for use in the days to come:

He will hunt for facts as you have seen boys and girls do for four-leaf clover. Facts are stubborn things, and for that very reason they are good foundation material. When a new fact is found it is a good practice to reflect upon it, and turn it over in the mind until you know it, and know what it means as well as you know how many hats you have.

A liberal knowledge of facts relating to human nature in general is certain to be of much value. Neither in public or private, by tongue or pen, can men influence men, unless they have acted upon the principle that the proper study of mankind is man. It was because our Lord knew man and what was in him that the common people heard Him gladly, and they will hear any man gladly who knows how to awaken the melodies that can come only by touching heart-strings.

The preacher should always be gathering up facts about human nature as our grandmothers gathered up and preserved quilt pieces. Almost anything of any kind that has to do with humanity will do the preacher good service at some time or another. It is a good exercise to study a man's face, as you would the map of a strange country into which you are about to travel.

Expression is the handwriting of thought. Try to learn to read it. Note the little things; the ordinary, every-day common things, that are as finger-boards pointing out the pathway of character. Try to conceive from his looks and acts the kind of thoughts the man thinks, and the kind of life he would live if he had the power to do as he would, with none to hinder or make him afraid. Then load your gospel gun with buckshot for that kind of game, and when you pull the trigger you will see feathers fly.

I once had a newspaper friend who could study a face for ten minutes and then write a life chapter

you would feel sure the man himself had told him. When you study faces try to imagine what the lives have been that have made them what they are, for to be able to read faces well will enable you to turn pages in living books, and there find sermons that will go as straight to the heart that needs them as the Philistine cattle went with the ark of God to the wheat-field where they were offered in sacrifice.

In connection with your study of human nature, as you mingle with men, it will also be helpful to notice how truly human nature has been brought out in the Bible. No such book on human nature can be found as God's book, for it never makes a mistake in its etchings of character. A man told me that he had seen many great actors in the rôle of Richard the Third, but that Edwin Booth was the only one who did not forget that he was lame when he got into the sword fight. He, and he only, carried his limp all the way through.

Study closely any character in the Bible and you will find the characteristic thing done all the way through. Take John and Peter going to the sepulcher, for instance. Both ran. It would not have been natural for either of them to have walked toward the garden that morning. John outran Peter and arrived first, but instead of going on into the sepulcher he stopped and looked in, and was still doing so when Peter came up and ran straight in.

John was the thoughtful and deliberate one, and it would not have been natural for him to have done otherwise than as he did. But Peter was heedless

and impulsive, and the natural thing for him was the very opposite of what John did. Change the story so that the actions are reversed, and the picture would have been spoiled, for it would not be true to the laws of human nature. Reverse the actions and you make each man drop his limp, and this the Bible never does.

The close student of human nature will find in the Bible's superhuman accuracy in its etchings of character another convincing evidence that it comes from God, for man could no more do it than he could put the polish of the thorn on a wooden toothpick.

In his quest for knowledge that will have power in it for him, the preacher would do well to learn all he can about the things that have much to do with the daily life of his people. A minister got a shoemaker deeply interested in religion by being well posted on leather.

The statement is made in Ben Hur that every experience in life has something to do with fitting us for the accomplishment of something we could not do without its help, and the thought is made clear by showing that there was one supreme moment in the chariot race when, to bring his flying team around in the right way to overthrow his enemy and gain the victory, Ben Hur needed to be unusually strong in his forearms, and this strength he acquired by having pulled on the oar for three years as a galley slave.

The storms of winter put something into the fiber of the oak it could never find in the warmth and quiet of summer. Going to the lions' den gave Dan-

iel a hold on the heart of the king that was like the strong grip of the lion's paw ever afterward.

If the preacher goes with both eyes wide open, and with a heart that is open as well, the time he spends in visiting shops, factories, mills, coal mines, etc., will put some of the best material into his barrel he will ever take out of it. Finding out how many hard licks a man has had to strike to get his dollar will make it much easier to open the Bible in the right place for him.

Actual knowledge to a degree of appreciation, of the thing a man must do every day in his battle for bread, has in it a free masonry by which a brother is known everywhere. If I have shed tears in the same dark places where another man has wept, and have been glad on the bright hilltops where he has rejoiced, that is holy ground for both of us. If I have been in the same battle where another man was wounded, the moment we know it we are comrades, and can sup together as others cannot. So let the preacher not forget to put into his barrel all the fruit he has taken from the tree of knowledge, whether it be sweet or bitter.

By close observation something more than a mere inkling may be obtained of a great many things that will help to put the italics in the right place in the sermon. It was a rule with Henry Ward Beecher never to see a man doing anything that was useful without observing how he did it as closely as if he expected at some time to have to make his living in doing that very thing.

As he was driving in the country one day his horse

lost a shoe, and he stopped at a crossroads shop to have it replaced, but the blacksmith was absent. The man lived near by, however, so Mr. Beecher explained to his wife that he was something of a blacksmith himself, and asked permission to use the shop and the tools, which was readily granted.

The great man went into the little shop, hung up his long-tailed coat in a corner, and put on the smith's big leather apron. He then fired up in the forge, and put on the shoe the best he knew how. He was not satisfied with the job, however, and felt that he could do better next time, which was true, for he had learned something from the experience.

When he reached another shop he stopped to have the shoe removed and put on right. The smith, who was a big burly man, took up the horse's foot, looked at it a moment, then dropped it and turning to the amateur smith said, in a very gruff voice: "Who put on that shoe?" "I did, sir," said Mr. Beecher, with some fear and trembling, for he expected to be scored without mercy. "Well, sir, my advice to you is to stick to blacksmithing as long as you live, for that's what God made you for," said the man. Mr. Beecher said he considered that the greatest compliment he ever received in his life.

That is the way to acquire knowledge and make it pay its house rent and board ever afterward. Mr. Beecher was all the better preacher for that very experience. More than one man has learned how to strike while the iron was hot in his preaching by lessons he learned in a blacksmith shop.

Lincoln picked up his vocabulary in the selfsame way that the great preacher learned how to shoe that horse. When he was once asked how he managed to obtain such a remarkable command of language, with his limited opportunity, he said:

"Well, if I have got any power that way, I will tell you how I suppose I came by it. You see when I was a boy all the local politicians used to come to our cabin to discuss politics with my father. I used to sit by and listen to them, but father wouldn't let me ask many questions, and there were a good many things I did not understand. Well, I would go up to my room in the attic and sit down, or pace back and forth till I made out just what they meant. And then I'd lie awake for hours, just a-putting their ideas into words that the boys around our way could understand."

The preacher who will follow a similar course toward all useful information will find something more than cracker crumbs in his barrel when he shakes it.

In casting about for something to put in his barrel the preacher should make it a rule to learn something from everybody he talks with, and from everything he falls in with. On some of the great railroad systems trains never stop for water, but the engine takes it up from a trough between the tracks while going at full speed, and in like manner the preacher should scoop as he runs. Emerson said, "Every man I meet is my master in some point, and of that I learn of him."

The man is bound to get a diploma that will mean something if he knows how to find a teacher everywhere. He will always be in school, learning his lessons every day, and learning them well. There isn't a child six years old from whom the biggest man in the country may not learn something worth knowing, and something not to be learned from anybody else. Ideas from which great fortunes have sometimes been realized have been suggested by little children.

It is well to be on the alert for ideas when listening to persons of intelligence and individuality, no matter whether they write books or sweep streets, and by doing this the preacher may have a living library, whose pages will fairly teem with good things that may be had for the taking, as the little boy found Uncle Remus a better story-book than any his parents could buy for him. Hamlet could learn something from a grave-digger.

The preacher is doing something to fill his barrel if he cultivates resourcefulness. One of the readiest speakers in the country made himself so by never shunning a chance to make an address, even when the conditions were as unfavorable as they possibly could be. The only way to learn to swim is to jump into the water and begin to paddle.

The preacher should endeavor more and more to be full of expedients, ready for any unexpected call that comes, like a small boy who was sent on an old mule to bring home some watermelons. He was given nothing to carry them in, but was told to be

sure and bring two. But when did a boy's wits ever fail him where a watermelon was concerned? He used his little breeches for saddle-bags, and was rewarded with a big piece of the core.

Knowing his Bible well will make any minister like a watered garden. A young preacher told Moody that if he would only stop going to books for his sermons, and would study his Bible exclusively for six months he would never be the same man again, and the prophecy proved true.

Moody began with Jeremiah, and by the time he had studied that book thirty days he became so full of it that he had to stop men on the street and pour it out on them. Isn't that better than scratching yourself bald-headed in trying to find something to preach about?

A preacher ought to know his Bible as well as the street-car conductor knows the streets over which his car runs. He should know well all the main events in the history of the chosen people, and how to get good lessons out of them, if called on in a hurry. He will be aided in remembering by grouping together in his mind the things that happened in or near certain cities, or about certain mountains. He ought to know about the great battles, and what resulted from them. Also the most important things in the lives of the Bible's great men should be fixed in the mind, and occasionally reflected on. The leading events in the time of the Judges, and in the reigns of the kings of both Israel and Judah, should be put into the barrel.

The preacher should be able to tell a good many Bible stories well, and know how to give a prayer-meeting talk from any of them. He needs also to be familiar with the most prominent psalms, and able to do the same with them. It will greatly aid him to be well grounded in the leading parables, and miracles, and the sayings and discourses of our Lord. It is almost imperative that he should be able to turn at once to the brightest chapters for those who are in distress and trouble, and to the sweetest promises for those who are going through deep waters.

It is not so needful, but it would help him greatly sometimes to have David and Solomon's counsel to the young at his tongue's end. He should also be able to find the verses that make plain the way to the soul that is earnestly seeking Christ.

In short the preacher should endeavor to be as familiar with his Bible as he is with his study, and as able to put his hand on anything he wants in one place as the other. As Peter Cartwright blazed his way from one preaching place to another through the wilderness, so the preacher ought to be able to find his way anywhere in his Bible by land-marks he has made familiar.

Another helpful thing is to study the analogies in Scripture between real and spiritual life. Take the call of Abraham, for instance, and notice how everything in his life is coincident with what happens in spiritual life.

God called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to an unknown land that would be shown him, and

there you have the sinner's call to repentance. Both are in a far country when the divine call reaches them. Abraham was an idolator, and lived among idolators, and so does every sinner. Abraham was rich in flocks and herds; and so is the sinner, in his talents and worldly experiences, from which he will take many good sheep to offer to the Lord when he reaches Bethel.

Abraham was charged to leave his kindred, and the sinner must turn his back on the sinful pleasures and pursuits that are the same as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Abraham tried to take his father and some of the rest of the family with him, and so too does the sinner hold on to the "old man" and other kindred belonging to his life in the world, and as Abraham was delayed at Haran until Terah gave up the ghost, so the sinner never can enter the Canaan of new birth until his self-will is dead.

In like manner any number of analogies can be found right along that will show the Bible to be a living book as it is opened to the people.

Almost every history will be found to correspond to spiritual life in a similar way, for the Old Testament is made up of soul pictures in every variety and shade. No conversion ever took place that is not pictured there. Every trial, every temptation, every backsliding and every victory; they are all there. Trace some of them out and the precious oil will begin to flow and never stop as long as you can find a vessel to put it in. Nothing will put so much good meal in the preacher's barrel as knowing his Bible well.

In his general reading the preacher will find it helpful to get in the habit of noting apt and striking thoughts that are well expressed, and in his own books marking those especially that are full of meat for him, indexing on a fly leaf those he will be most likely to want to refer to. It is a profitable exercise to review the markings occasionally and very thoughtfully. Do the same with good illustrations.

It is well also to keep a note-book in which to record good thoughts found in books that do not belong to you. Do as the bee does. Miss no chance to take home honey to your hive. Never pass a proverb or terse saying without turning it over in your mind, as a bear is said to do with a dead man, to see if there is any life in it for you. Do not merely commit it, but get at the thought. Crack it as you would a nut, and take the meat out of it.

The habit of reflection is as good a thing for the preacher as the X-ray is for the doctor, for by it he can go down to the very bone and marrow of a matter. It clarifies, deepens and fixes in the memory that which would make slight impression and be soon lost, as was the Chinaman's ice he put in the sun to dry.

Reading without reflection is like plowing with a crooked stick. It is a good plan to spend some time in reflection every day, for reflection is to the inner man what the chewing of the cud is to the cow. It prepares the grass for sticking to the ribs. A reflective habit, if followed up, will result in settled opinions about important things, for foggy and hazy

notions will be swept away, as the fan cleans the wheat.

The man who would have his preaching help others must be able to give a reason that will have weight with the jury. To see a thing clearly yourself is the best preparation for making others see it just as well. Reflection carefully sorts, sifts and assimilates.

The ability to remember things by association should be cultivated. Tie your knowledge up in bunches with some kind of a cord of association, as by comparing and contrasting things with each other. Make one thing as naturally bring another as the horse does the wagon and the cow the calf. By this means almost anything you can see, hear, taste or handle may be turned into a net that will bring up good fish out of the sea.

A man of my acquaintance once entertained a company of people for an hour by taking up certain articles which they had placed in a hat, and telling the interesting things each suggested to him. Such a habit would load a man for bear, and make him ready for any kind of a sudden call that might come.

Everything under the sun can be made to remind you of something else, if you will practice on it. It doesn't take much imagination to look at a fish-hook and see a black bass. Associations may be readily made by keeping the attention on a thing long enough at least to note its most important characteristics.

A man who was about to address a Sunday-school began by saying:

"What shall I say?" when a little girl, who had just been having her first experience with declamations, blurted out, "What do you know?"

The preacher who wants to fill his barrel with things that he can get out as he needs them should be continually asking himself that same question:

"What do I know about this? In what way does it differ from that? And in what respect does it resemble something else?"

Such questions make a good trident with which to spear many good fish. In some such way every new scrap of information may be tied to something already known.

There should be much reflection upon everything that is considered worth preserving. It should be turned over in the mind and looked at from all sides, and tried in this way and that, as a woman does with a new hat, before she makes up her mind whether she wants to wear it. Ask and answer all the questions about it you can. The where, the whence and the why, the who and the how?

The preacher should work incessantly in building up his vocabulary. He should be on the lookout for a new word as a young mother is for baby's first tooth, and when he finds it he should make it his own by immediately baptizing it and taking it into full membership without any probation. Like a new breastpin it should be used at the first chance, and not kept waiting until Sunday. A new word is like

a new tooth-brush; never entirely your own until you have used it, and then it will not be taken away from you.

New words should be used in such relations that the reflex influence upon the mind will be strong. Words are of little use until they carry an armful of ideas with them, and then they are like our own children. No matter what the preacher may have in his barrel he will need the help of the best vocabulary he can acquire to get it out and properly present it to his congregations.

Like a good dinner a good thought is all the better for a good setting. Many a regal thought is treated like a peasant because it comes to us in shabby garb. I think it was Charles Dudley Warner who said, "There are some words that are palaces to dwell in; treasure houses to explore. A single word may be a window through which we may behold all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

Sometimes a word may speak what volumes have attempted in vain to utter. There may be years of crowded passion in a phrase, and half a life may be concentrated in a sentence. Let the preacher therefore be sure to put into his barrel plenty of apt and expressive words, as Joseph stored up the good corn of Egypt, for one is as much a wise provision against famine as the other.

The preacher can have no more effective self-discipline than that which comes of his thinking of something to say to his people. This will keep him on the alert for ideas out of which to build his ser-

mons. As a shoemaker never looks at a side of leather without thinking of how it could be cut up to the best advantage, and a carpenter never passes a lumber-yard without musing over the houses he could build; and as an editor never comes upon a thought or incident without considering how he can make it give him a half a column or more, so the preacher will be continually on the alert for everything that can be made to bring a grist to his mill.

Wherever he is, he will be, subconsciously at least, preparing for the sermons he will some time have to preach, as Daniel Webster prepared his great drum-beat climax years before he used it. In this ceaseless storing up of corn against the day of famine he will say:

"Here is a common thing. How can I get something uncommon out of it? Here is something never before heard of. How can I get a striking and effective lesson from it? Here is a fine illustration that I ought to make sure of. Let me see; how can I best tell it with effect in a sermon, and what point could I press home with it? I will tell it to myself, and see what there is in it."

So he goes over it step by step, and idea by idea, mentally, silently, thoughtfully. He tells it to himself in the very best words he can command, and seeks to make a gem of effective simplicity out of it; a good picture made by a stroke or two. And it is this doing such things at a dash that tells, and it is this that the preacher learns how to do in learning how to think of something to say. The more he

does at it in this deliberate conscious disciplinary way the sooner it will become easy, and the easier it will become.

In the culmination of a climax, Wendell Phillips, as if looking for something to illuminate his thought, suddenly stretched out his hand over the table at his side, placed a finger in a glass of water, raised it slowly, and deliberately watched a single drop fall back into the goblet. His audience watched him breathlessly and were thrilled to the quick. When a friend afterward spoke of what a happy inspiration it was, Phillips smiled and said:

"I had practiced it before the glass until I had it down fine."

The happiest thoughts have been well thought out beforehand, and the best impromptu speeches are best when hammered to a red heat in advance. Sermons that have been the result of musing until the fire burned are the most likely to make the heart of the hearer burn while they are being delivered.

It is remarkable how the simple fact that you will have to speak at a certain time will help you to create the address you will make. You will think of it in your lying down and in your rising up. It will run through your dreams like measles through a boarding-house, and will stick to you day and night. You will forget the letter your wife gave you to mail, but you will not forget that you are elected to be on deck at a certain time with an address.

For a while your head will seem to have no more in it than some churches have when the last bell

rings on prayer-meeting night, but good thoughts, like late comers, will begin to filter in after a while. You thought all your thinking was fruitless, but it wasn't; it never is. When the time came you were as eager to start as a blooded horse. The incubation was going on all the while, though you didn't know it. The hen was on the nest, and the egg was being hatched.

Putting yourself under bond to be on hand with something to say is a great help in learning how to think of something to say. The moment you commit yourself you have hitched your wagon to a star. Then all you have to do is to hold steady and keep the wheels on the ground, and things are bound to move, and move in the right way.

While you are thinking of something to say, you will find that every speech or sermon you hear, and every book you pick up, and every conversation you hear, and every newspaper you read will put something in your barrel. It may not be just what you would like when it comes, but it will do, and often turns out to be better meal than you take it to be. If something better comes you will take it and use it, but if not, you will get along. You will do better next time by having done your best now.

This thinking habit will be in full operation while you are hearing other speakers. It will quicken both your eyes and ears. You will note their vocabulary, their illustrations, and how they manage their thought as closely as one driver observes how another handles his horses.

You will be quick to note what takes and what falls flat. Their thoughts will stir up others quite different in you, and dry land for your planting and reaping will come up out of their sea. What they say will give you something to say, whether they say anything or not.

While you are thinking of something to say, it will not be necessary to "read up" on the subject of your address if you are reasonably well posted beforehand.

Read the best English language you can find. Read, write and talk in the best vocabulary that comes to you. There is always room for improvement in the words of our mouths, as well as in the meditations of our hearts. Reading, writing and conversing, with the underthinking going on, creates facility and felicity in the use of language in public. The memory becomes charged with words, images, metaphors, ideas and phrases that press for utterance under the stimulus of the occasion and the excitement of ambition to do well.

As new illustrations are found it is a good plan to spend a moment or two in thinking of how they may be used; of just what turn of thought may be brought out with them.

"The habit of reflecting upon anecdotes, incidents or facts of any kind as illuminators of thought (says Dr. Buckley), and not merely their value as proof, or their intrinsic interest as information, will so impress them upon the mind, that as the time comes for an address, the speaker will have no difficulty in making

a selection which by its novelty will stimulate the attention of the hearer, and perhaps influence his feelings or judgment. And then should he at any time be compelled to speak without adequate preparation, illustrations will flow to his lips under the guidance of the ruling thought, requiring only that prompt and intelligent discrimination in their use which is the habit of his life."

Most men know enough to make a good speech about almost anything at the drop of a hat, if they could only think of the right thing to say while on their feet, as well as they can five minutes after they sit down, but not having anticipated the occasion they are all at sea when called upon unexpectedly. In a large union thanksgiving service, the minister who was to preach the sermon asked the pastor of the church in which the service was being held to make the opening prayer, and the good brother excused himself by saying, " I'm not prepared," and he was a Methodist preacher too.

Of course there are circumstances under which almost any man may be taken at great disadvantage, but there are many unexpected things which can be expected and prepared for, as William Tell put an arrow under his coat for Gesler, while the apple was being placed on the head of his boy.

It would prevent many a cold sweat if the preacher would at least put something in a little keg that he can carry under his long-tailed coat, for as many different kinds of unexpected calls as he can think of. Keeping a record of unexpected calls, so that

you may be able to see where lightning has struck in the past, is a good thing, for history is liable to repeat itself. That is why they have cyclone cellars in Kansas.

You may be called upon when a brother pastor is to be installed, or welcomed home from Europe or Jerusalem. So whittle out an arrow in good time and put it under your vest for that. When the new town hall is opened his honor the mayor may depend on you for a little spread eagle work, and the cares of state may be so heavy upon him that he will forget to mention it until the very moment when he calls on you to touch off the fireworks. Had you only had notice last week you could have had some brilliant pinwheels ready as well as not.

Take time by the forelock, and put something in your little keg that will keep your knees from knocking together "when the evil days come, and thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." If they don't dedicate the new town hall, there will be a new schoolhouse, or a new hotel, or some other kind of a chance to use that speech, somewhere, some time, for nothing is ever altogether lost, except the money you don't get for marrying folks.

Every preacher ought to have a dozen or more sermons too, that he could preach, if awakened at midnight and shot into the pulpit as firemen are dropped from the loft in which they sleep. I once saw a bishop called on unexpectedly to follow the regular orator at a fourth of July celebration. The

orator did well, but the bishop did better, for he had plenty of powder in his keg.

Many a man, however, has intellectual wealth that is not available because he has not trained himself to be ready to appropriate it. George MacDonald tells of a castle in which lived an old man and his son, and although they owned it they were starving along, like a lazy preacher on Hard Scrabble Circuit, and living at a half dying rate. Yet there had been concealed within the castle by remote ancestors, for future need, very costly jewels. Although close to abundance they were in constant famine because they did not know of their wealth or where to find it.

How much this is like the sad state of some preachers who are kept scratching at the bottom of their barrel harder than the widow did to get meal enough to make a cake for the prophet's supper, and yet they live in a land flowing with milk and honey, but never having anointed their eyes with just the right kind of eye salve they fail to see the abundance all about them.

It will make for the strength and vigor of the mind not to keep it thinking along the same line all the time. There is exhilaration in new thought as well as in new work, and the mind tires of a steady diet of liver and greens just as much as we do. On this account it is well at times to reflect on something not before thought of—or at least not recently. This will rest and rejuvenate the brain as a new physical exercise quickens the body. It will keep the in-

tellectual powers from going down like a punctured tire. There will be glad activity, buoyant energy and resiliency. Thoughts will come rapidly, and will have spears in their hands when they do come.

The Christian ministry is unlike any other calling in the world in this, that nothing in the way of knowledge, no matter how or where gained, is irrelevant to it. Like the broken bits of stained glass out of which the apprentice made a window that became a masterpiece, everything the preacher has learned will sooner or later find its place, as he tries to do his work according to the pattern shown in the mount.

Just as there was need in the tabernacle for everything that Israel carried out of Egypt, from the goats' hair to the gold, so there is need in the pulpit for everything the preacher can bring with him to his great work in the way of knowledge and experience. This great truth from Solomon has no more certain realization in a downright practical way anywhere in life than it has in the ministry of Jesus Christ:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Let the preacher learn as much as he can about everything possible, and even though his appointment

may take him into the heart of a desert he will find living springs there. His knowledge, like the rod of Moses, will give him power to smite the flinty rock and make it pour forth a flowing stream of good. Knowledge is power only to those who know how to put on the harness and hitch it up.

I once read a story of how a half dozen scientists were cast away on a desert island, and with nothing but bare hands and pocket-knives and the knowledge they took with them, they soon managed to obtain for themselves the comforts they had enjoyed at home.

They found the island rich in iron and other useful ores, and having the wisdom to know what it was, and what to do with it, they made tools with which to work, and with these tools they made whatever else they wanted. They made saws and axes, with which in due time they made a sawmill, with which they made lumber out of which they built their home.

They found wild plants and shrubs which they cultivated into useful grains and fruits, and so they kept on until they made their barren island to blossom as the rose, and as those men found wealth like that of Aladdin in the desert, so the preacher who is resourceful and has practical wisdom will be able to find homiletic material wherever he goes.

The difference between success and failure is the ability to get much out of little. One of the best addresses to men I ever heard began with the story of a lop-eared yellow dog with a broken tail, who would run to pick up sticks and stones thrown by

his master. This little story, told while one would draw a breath or two, made the backbone for the address. Some very common and homely things can be made to do good service if they once get into the preacher's barrel.

A single potato carried to England by Sir Walter Raleigh, in the sixteenth century, has multiplied into food for millions. A drop of ink is nothing in itself, but if a thought gets into it it will move the world. Trifles light as air may to a fertile mind suggest great things. Bits of broken glass used to amuse children led to the invention of the kaleidoscope. A ship worm boring a piece of wood suggested the idea of a tunnel under the Thames at London.

A Yankee soldier in the Civil War observed a bird hulling rice, and shot it. Taking its bill for a model he invented a hulling machine which has revolutionized the rice business. A thoughtful man studied a freight car for a few minutes while waiting for his train, and from what he learned all the steel cars in the world have come. Small things are great when there is greatness back of the eye.

Jesus could see a sermon in a sparrow, the most worthless bird that flies. And yet the world is full of preachers who are trying to make butter by milking a dry cow. If the salt has lost its savor the sooner it goes to the dump heap the better.

There is a legend of an artist who wasted years in hunting for a fine piece of sandal wood out of which to carve a Madonna. Just when he was about to give up and leave the dream of his life unrealized, a

still small voice within him whispered that he should carve the Madonna from a block of oak wood taken from the wood-pile. He obeyed, and produced a masterpiece from a stick of common fire-wood.

Many of us waste our time and miss our opportunities in looking for sandal wood when common logs that would work up well are lying all about us.

One of the finest pieces of wood-carving I ever saw was made from a fence rail, with no other tools than a chisel and a jack-knife. Chicago has an artist who is called the farmer painter, who has made pictures that have brought him fame, medals and money, and they are all paintings of the common things found on every farm, like baskets of corn, old copper kettles, squashes, pumpkins and so on. There is plenty of gold in the ground we walk on if we only had an X-ray vision that could penetrate it deep enough.

The preacher will find plenty to put in his barrel if he will only learn to see the greatness there is in common things. The greatness that the Master was always finding and using for material in His sermons is everywhere. There was nothing so small that He could not get a great lesson out of it, and in doing this He was teaching us how to preach. A woman making bread; a farmer sowing seed; children playing in the market-place; a little boy's lunch; a shepherd taking care of his sheep. Nothing was too homely or simple to have a place in the matchless discourses He gave, and if He were here now as He was then, it would be the same.

Everything that is familiar to the daily life of our time would be used. Dynamos and motors, door-bells, street cars, automobiles, milk wagons, cash registers and electric lights. Town clocks, lawn-mowers, telephones, office buildings, fireworks, garden hose, search-lights, Fourth of July accidents, and everything else that would serve his purpose would be used.

He showed us how to do it, and we ought to be quick to catch the meaning of the lesson, and look about us for the bread that is scattered everywhere, as the manna was in the wilderness. A man with the divine afflatus can find poetry in his own back yard.

VI

WHY SOME MINISTERS FAIL

I DO not assume to be an authority on the subject discussed in this chapter, but a boy can hold a light for a man to work by, and it may be that what I have picked up here and there, in observing many preachers of many kinds, will enable me to drop a thought or two into some of your pure minds that will do for you something like what the penny does for the slot machine.

I am aware that there is no reliable definition of just what failure in the ministry is, and I don't know that there is any good reason why there should be, for every man has his own opinion about it anyhow, and what might seem to one to be great failure would to another pass for equally great success. It all depends upon the view-point, and the size of the beam that may happen to be in the eye that looks.

As a Jew read his newspaper he struck the headline, "Is Marriage a Failure?" He pondered the matter for a moment, and then said:

"Vell, if de voman vas rich I don't know but vat it vas yust as goot as a failure."

And so in the ministry, much that we would size up as gold and silver may be entered on the recording angel's book as hay and stubble, and much that we call failure may turn out to be what God calls suc-

cess. Without undertaking to say just what failure is, therefore, I will mention a few things that would seem to at least dwarf the usefulness of the minister. At the head of the list I will put down —

1. Lack of natural ability. Unless a man is born with preach in him I don't believe he can ever get it there. I hold these truths to be self-evident: That God settled some things for eternity before the foundations of the world were laid, and one of them is that a man with no music in his soul can never become a Paderewski, and another is that the preacher must be born with his preach in him, or no theological institution can ever put it there.

At a conference where Bishop Simpson was preaching as only he could preach, two old preachers sitting side by side were so affected that tears filled their eyes. One clutched the other by the arm and said:

"Brother, why is it that great lamp of the Lord can fill this whole house with light, while so many of us are nothing more than little sick room tapers?" And the other replied:

"The Lord put a good wick in him, brother—the Lord put a good wick in him."

The principal reason why some men fail is that the Lord didn't put a good wick in them for the ministry. Just as there are pieces of hickory that Omnipotence couldn't make a good ax-handle out of, without first remaking the timber, so there are men trying to be preachers to-day who would have to be born again, and born of altogether different parents too, before the Lord Himself could ever make

anything more than common sticks out of them in the ministry. Many are far from being what they want to be in the ministry to-day because they were not born in the tribe of Levi.

2. Another reason for failure that I believe ought to come in near the top of the list, is uncertainty about the call to preach. There are men who feel sure they have had a divine call whenever they have a good time in preaching, but when they have no liberty, and the people sit and yawn in their faces, and look almost bored to death, they begin to have serious doubts about it, and I have known two or three who were so completely in the shadow of the juniper tree that they were about convinced that the accuser of the brethren had more to do with their being in the ministry than the Lord Himself had.

Unless there is absolute certainty about the divine call, I doubt if there can be any real power in the ministry. The man who would open the Bible for people to live and die by ought to know beyond all chance of doubt that God has sent him to do it. If he doubts this the probabilities are that he will do more harm than good in the pulpit. I once heard D. L. Moody say that he wouldn't advise any man to preach if he could possibly do anything else.

I rather admire the precaution Gideon took to make sure that he had not misunderstood the Lord about the work he was about to undertake. So he put out his fleece, not once only, but twice, and never struck a lick until his last doubt was gone. This shows very clearly, too, how ready God is to

give the fullest light to the one who really wants to know His will before taking a decisive step. Men could perhaps be found who would be making shoes or running a gas engine if all preachers had used as much wool for the same purpose as Gideon did.

3. Another serious drawback is lack of earnestness. If there is any place where half-heartedness should never be found, it is in the ministry. The man who is half asleep himself cannot arouse others. A bullet straight from the gun disturbs the enemy more than a cannon-ball at rest.

In Dante's Inferno he saw a lot of souls who couldn't get anywhere. They were the lukewarm fellows who were not good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell, and so they were kept out in the cold and had to shiver around between the two places, and such history is always repeating itself.

Nothing will shut the door of every good kingdom in our faces like lack of earnestness, but everybody makes way for the man who starts for the front as if he meant to get there.

Find an earnest man anywhere in the ministry, and you find one who is making people sit up and take notice, whether he is preaching on Hard Scrabble Circuit or in Metropolitan Temple, for earnestness is to the man what steam is to the boiler. It makes things go, and keeps them going.

You can't discourage an earnest man by blocking his way with difficulties or throwing cold water on him. The lion that comes out and roars against him is simply ringing the bell for its own funeral, for the

next thing it knows it will find itself turned into a beehive. And by the way, the flavor of dead lion in the honey beats that of clover and buckwheat all to pieces, but only the earnest can ever taste it.

You can't dismay an earnest man, or make him give up his job by making his work hard, for with Nehemiah he will say:

"Should such a man as I show the white feather? Not on your life!"

Nothing can put a man of that kind on the side-track. "Put stumbling-blocks in his way and he will use them for stepping-stones. Put him in a log cabin in the wilderness, and he will make his way to the White House. Put him in prison, and he will send out books to delight the world. Take away his eyesight, and he will produce Paradise Lost or the Conquest of Mexico." Nothing can put him down and keep him there.

The earnest man never wears out the cushion on his chair waiting for a golden opportunity, but makes a good one out of the iron and brass of the common things around him. He is always going on and getting on, for he believes in a land flowing with milk and honey, and is determined to have a farm there, no matter how big the giants are.

I don't suppose the Lord has any more use for milk and water people in the ministry than He had for them in Laodicea. The promises for crowns and new names and white stones are "to him that overcometh," not to him who thinks that perhaps he will rise up and gird himself after a while.

Many a man is on the flat of his back to-day because he was not more in earnest yesterday. There is one thing I like about a bantam rooster, and that is his earnestness. He puts all there is of him into his crow. Let the preacher do the same thing, and he will never hear anybody snore.

4. Another drawback with some preachers is that they live too much on stilts. The stilts of ministerial dignity, preacher mannerisms, bloodless platitudes, pious austerity, or something else that puts the man so high above his fellows that they couldn't touch him with a ten foot pole.

There are better ways of helping men up out of the mud than by throwing sermons at them from the tree tops. The word must be made flesh before it can ever reach those who are in the flesh. Preaching John Smith and him dignified is an altogether different thing from preaching Christ and Him crucified.

Going around on stilts, throwing bakery circulars into up-stairs windows, may seem to be an energetic way of putting in the time, but standing on the ground floor and handing out real bread is a far better way to reach the hungry.

"The village priest of austerity
Climbed up in the high church steeple,
To be near God that he might hand
His word down to the people.

"In sermon script he daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven,
And poured it out on the people's heads
Two times one day in seven.

"In his age God said, 'Come down and die,'
And he cried out from the steeple—
'Where art thou, Lord?' And the Lord replied—
'Down here, among my people.'"

5. Another very common cause of failure is cold heartedness. The preacher means well, works hard, and wants to do good, but in spite of his good intentions he carries a chill with him wherever he goes. A brother of this kind told me some time ago that nearly everybody in his church had the grip, and I didn't wonder at it. I knew where they got it.

A certain United States Senator had a national reputation for being cold blooded, and a Washington newspaper one day said:

"Senator Blank yesterday left his seat for ten minutes, and Senator B. sat down in it for five minutes and took a heavy cold."

A refrigerator is a good thing in the right place, but the right place is not a pulpit.

The world is so full of those who have heartaches and disappointments, and struggles, and burdens, and troubles, and all these unfortunates are like the poor man who had no one to help him into the fountain. They wait and wait, and hope against hope for some warm heart to give them help, but how often despair comes when those to whom they stretch out their feeble hands pass coldly by on the other side.

This old world of ours is in a greater famine for sympathy than it ever was for bread, and is starving for a little bit of love. As Pennefather, the English philanthropist, was walking with another man on the

street, a hungry looking man stopped in front of him and said, "O man with heaven in your face, won't you help me?"

I believe that Jesus must have had just such a face. A face into which no helpless one could ever look without feeling that he was about to have help at last, for no one in real need ever went away from Him without being helped. If the preacher has heaven in his heart and warm blood in his veins, God will make his ministry like a watered garden.

"I do not see the wounded soldier," said Walt Whitman. "I am that man!"

That's why the good Samaritan ministered as he did to the wounded Jew. He had compassion on him, and when we have that, there will be no failure in our ministry.

6. Another bar to success is suppressed individuality. The preacher has no greater asset than his own personality, and yet it too often happens that he does the least with it. We are exhorted to present our own bodies, which, I take it, means our very selves. Not what we think we ought to be, but what we really are. Our own individual, unfixed-up self. This is what God wants from us, and He will take no substitute.

It was because Abraham was Abraham, and Jacob was Jacob, and Moses was Moses, that God wanted them. He saw just the timber in them He wanted to shape and use. It was because Peter, James and John were Peter, James and John that they were chosen for disciples.

The work God accomplished through Moses could not have been wrought through any other man, any more than a tow string can be made to do the work of a backbone. The fine-twined linen could not take the place of the tent stake in the tabernacle, nor could the goats' hair be made to serve the same purpose as the gold. The hoe and the axe can never change places.

What a blacksmith wants for the making of a horseshoe is iron, not a chromo imitation of it, and what God wants for the making of a preacher is undiluted personality. If God sent us into the world to be iron cog-wheels the sooner we find it out and stop trying to make big brass whistles of ourselves the better.

I suppose the Master saw any number of men with greater gifts than Peter, James and John who were willing to become disciples, but they had so patched themselves up with imitations and appropriations of other men that He couldn't use them. What He had to have was individuality that was not spotted with color splotches from other folks.

He took the fishermen because they were fishermen, and not college professors. A theological professor in Simon Peter's place might have set the world back from God's plan a thousand years.

When God calls us He wants us. Not the man we think we ought to be, or the man we hope to be, or the man our friends think us to be. God puts the timber of individuality in us before birth, just as He does in the tree, and it is this He wants to

put into His temple. Not the veneer of something else.

Environment, culture and other things can change the size and quality, but not the kind. The grain was foreordained, and it can only be changed by the same power that did the foreordaining. If God gets the real thing from us He can change it to suit His purpose, as the smith does the form of the iron.

That God wants individuality is very clearly brought out in the minute description of everything used in the Tabernacle, and in His charge to Moses to make everything according to the pattern shown in the mount. Gideon and his wonderful band were also chosen for their individuality. The Invincible Three Hundred were not like everybody else, and that is why it only took a few of them to use up the Midianites.

In some very common things they differed from other folks and so it isn't likely that they would blow their trumpets or rattle their pitchers or carry their lamps exactly as others did. This would add to the value of their service, for the enemy would never be able to tell what they would do next. It would be like trying to dodge a cross-eyed man who was after you with a shotgun.

This ought to be a solemn warning to every young preacher to stop imitating others, and be willing to be himself, even if he does think that in his own way he doesn't amount to much. If the Lord made you peculiar, young man, He probably had a good reason for it, and so don't try to spoil the job and

lose your personality by imitating Dr. This or Professor That.

Improve yourself all you can by culture and training, but be sure that it is your own self that you are improving. Don't repeat a mistake I once made, when in the early dawn I went to the barn and curried another preacher's horse, thinking I was at work on my own. Have your ideal, but don't give up the real. What the preacher is is of far greater importance than what he does.

Those lamps, pitchers and trumpets must have differed very greatly from each other, for so many just alike could not have been found in all Israel. Some of the trumpets no doubt had a very sweet tone, while others gave forth a sound as rasping as the voice of a prohibitionist in a Personal Liberty convention.

Some had small mouthpieces and others large. Some were hard to blow and others easy. Some were almost new, and others had been in the family for generations, and may have had their part in the taking of Jericho. Some were bright and others dingy; but they were all trumpets, capable of making a noise of some kind, and noise was a great thing in that campaign, and is yet in some places.

The same individual distinction was also a marked feature of the lamps and pitchers. They were not alike, and yet they were every one the real thing, like the repentance of Zaccheus. The pitchers were of all kinds, shapes and sizes. Some would hold a pint, and others a gallon or more, but the little

pitchers were as surely pitchers as the big ones, and had their part in helping to scare the wits out of the Midianites when the proper time came.

Not a soldier in that heroic little band could have been kept out of the ranks because his pitcher was too small or not the right color. If it was a pitcher, and not the conventional goatskin bag, like everybody else had, the man who carried it could pass the guard-line, no matter whether it held a pint or a gallon.

What was true of the pitchers and trumpets was also true of the lamps. Not one of them was half pitcher or two-thirds trumpet. They were lamps all over and all the way through. Some only made a feeble light perhaps, but it was light nevertheless. It wasn't fox-fire.

Other lamps probably flickered, and their light almost went out at the critical moment, like that of Peter just before the cock crew, but they were real lamps just the same, and had their part in putting the enemy to rout when every man blew with his trumpet and shouted:

"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!"

Some may have contained much oil, and others only a little, but that had nothing to do with the case. The great thing and the essential thing was that it was a lamp, and not a picture of the sunrise, and was where it was wanted in the battle.

Individuality is something that cannot be analyzed or defined, any more than the thing that makes a grain of corn grow can be analyzed and defined, but it is that very thing God wants from each of us, and

earth and heaven will be robbed if He fails to get it. There is as much difference between individuality and the imitation of it as there is between the living face and a pasteboard mask.

The power of the preacher comes from something in his personality that makes him different from other men. He is not just like Smith or Jones or Brown, and it is because of this very thing that God has called him into the ministry. We want the violet because it is a violet, and not a sunflower. Were it to undertake to make a sunflower of itself it would be as ridiculous as some preachers we all know.

7. The preacher who would succeed must have an ambition to be something more than a shoe-peg in a granary. He must determine to be a growing man. In a conversation I partly overheard in a street-car one day, one man said that another could take his collar off over his head without having to unbutton it. Whether he could or not, something very similar sometimes comes to pass in the ministry.

The Bible says that no man by worry can add a cubit to his stature, but it also says that the right kind of a man shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which is only another way of saying that he shall be a grower in a great way.

Every man in the Bible who amounted to anything was a growing man, and the preacher who climbs any kind of a pinnacle and stays there must be a man of growth.

The preacher who is not always in school, trying to learn something from everything and from every-

body, will soon be dried up and stored away with the other mummies. The man who graduates and stops there will soon be able to take his collar off over his head.

8. One of the greatest hindrances to success in the ministry is self-conceit. This blinds a man to the ability of others and gives him an exaggerated opinion of his own.

The conceited man is a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, who never hears better music than he can make himself, and he wants everybody else to keep time to the music he makes. Let him do the talking and the praying and it is a good meeting. Let him do the preaching and it is a fine sermon. Let him carry the flag and it is a great procession. Let him have his way and the world will soon be saved. Let it be any other way, and the millennium will never come.

The conceited man is a man on stilts, trying to hide his wooden legs with long pantaloons. He is a little man on a big pedestal; a grasshopper on the top of a telegraph pole. He is like a cheap restaurant, with everything in the front window, and no meat on the table. He tries to swell up and look as big as a house, but touch him with the finger of wisdom and down he goes like a bubble that has burst.

I was on a steamer when one of the passengers shot a sea bird that looked like an eagle, but when the feathers were stripped off it looked like a humming-bird that had been caught in the rain, and that's

the conceited man for you. All fuss and feathers, and not much else. The conceited man is all front door. All he cares for is outside appearance, and the moment you open the door you find yourself out in the back yard.

It is the meek who are to inherit the earth; not the fellows with the big head. There is more hope for a fool than for the man who thinks he knows it all, but we must not be too hard on him, for we all know how it is ourselves—by spells.

9. Another very serious drawback is lack of proper training. Sometimes the preacher has been in such a hurry to begin fencing in his corner of Zion that he didn't take time to grind his axe, and in other cases there was no way by which he could get the use of a grindstone. Sometimes his preparation has been faulty and lop-sided. He filled himself with a lot of stuff that would be of no more service to him in the ministry than a crane's legs would be to a setting hen. He knows how to paint a fire, but he doesn't know how to boil a teakettle.

He knows how to make sermons as beautiful as snow, and about as cold, but he can't tell people how to endure by seeing Him who is invisible when things are going wrong. He knows all about Ibsen and Shakespeare and Browning and the latest kink in the new theology, but he doesn't know where to find the chapter in the Bible that says a church pillar will lose his soul if he skins his brother in a horse trade, or pulls the wool over his eyes in a stock deal.

He knows much about everything under the sun

except how to please God in the business he is in. He can tell you all about the people who lived three thousand years ago, but he doesn't know anything about how the people live in the next block, and he couldn't find the parable of the Prodigal Son without a concordance to save his life. He has so much book knowledge that he couldn't crowd his head through a barrel hoop without skinning his ears, and knows so little about human nature that on that line he could take his collar off over his head. If the fireman had as little practical qualification for his business as the preacher sometimes has for his, the town would burn up.

I believe the Indian was about the best trained man for the life he had to live of anybody ever known in this country, and I have thought of how soon the devil would be in the hospital if every preacher were only as well qualified for his mission as every Indian was for his. The Indian knew the track of everything that had feet, and could see its footprints as plainly on the dry leaves as he could in the snow. Everything in forest and plain had a voice that he well understood. He had been taught to use his eyes so well that he could see a thousand things everywhere that no other could see.

He knew all about his enemy, and was always guarding against surprise, and so alert was he that he could not be taken at a disadvantage. The Indian could scent a wolf a mile away, but the preacher may sometimes have three or four on his official board and never suspect it.

It was a training as thorough and practical as that of the Indian that the Master gave to the fishermen He found on the Sea of Galilee, and it is mainly through lack of a similar training in things needful that so many have had to write failure after their names in the ministry.

10. Another great reason for ministerial failure is lack of tact. The preacher needs gumption as much as he does humility and piety, for the Lord needs intelligent service quite as much as He does loyalty that will go to the stake. I have no doubt that Paul won as many by his tact as he did by preaching all night. He was able to do this because he had learned some things in the making and selling of tents that he couldn't learn at the feet of Gamaliel. Tact wins where great gifts without it would fail. It will help the preacher more to know how to rub the fur the right way than to know how many animals there were in the ark.

A preacher told me that he made seven calls one morning before breakfast, and prayed in every home. I didn't wonder that he had to do so much hard preaching to empty benches. I knew another who asked a woman about her husband's health two years after his death.

Praising the Lord with the loud cymbal is all right, but it is well to know how to use the soft pedal. If hard-headed zeal could have saved the world it would have been done in the time of Samson. The preacher needs to be as wise as the serpent and as harmless as the dove, but he cannot be as harmless as the dove unless he is as wise as the serpent.

Had the old serpent in Eden been as ignorant of human nature as some of the preachers are there would have been no fall. The man who would take a sledge-hammer to crack a peanut has no business in the ministry, but he too often gets there.

A drummer who had just taken a large order for fountain pens was told to cancel it at once because he booked it with a pencil. He was a Solomon to one or two preachers I have known.

Rehoboam lost the big end of his kingdom because he saw too little and said too much. Somebody has said that against stupidity even the gods themselves are powerless, and we all know that in the ministry it is true. A man may be as good as an angel, and yet do little good because he is so much like a bull in a china shop.

11. Failure sometimes results from the preacher trying to do too much. I once saw a couple of pictures that made me do a great deal of thinking. In one a preacher had his church on his back, and was carrying the whole business. In the other all his members were in a big wagon, and he was pulling them up a steep hill.

Things like that ought never to happen outside of books. I once spent a Sabbath with a preacher of this kind. He was the leader of the choir, president of the young people's society, class leader, chief usher, and about everything else there was to be. I didn't learn whether he did the janitor's work or not. I did learn, however, that he did about all the talking and praying in the prayer-meeting, and that his

church was suffering from locomotor ataxia, brought on through lack of proper exercise.

Had Simon Peter followed the same plan with the one hundred and twenty in the upper room I doubt if there would have been any Pentecost. A church that has everything done for it will soon be done for. Had Nehemiah tried to mix all the mortar, and carry all the stone, and do all the mason work, and all the fighting, neither Sanballat nor Tobiah would have been disturbed very much. If some preachers didn't try to do so much themselves the Lord would do more for their churches.

12. Some preachers fail because they do not preach the word. Sooner or later they get everything into their preaching except something out of the Bible. In too many pastors' studies the Bible is about the least used book in it.

A couple of colored men were one day discussing an eminent preacher, when one of them said:

"Has yo' heerd dat man?"

"Yas," replied the other, "I dun heerd him three o' fo' times."

"Wall, what yo' think about him anyhow, Mose?"

"Wall, I tell yo', Sam. Yo' take him inside de Bible an' he ain't no mo' 'count den dese oder preachers around huh; but ye take him outside de Bible, an' fo' de Lor' he kin thrash de earth."

And that summing up would not be far out of the way with too many preachers. There are so many other things they try to keep posted on that the word of God is sadly neglected, and so they must

perforce be outside of the Bible preachers. They so seldom get into the Bible, and they must make their sermons out of something they know something about, they think—though they don't always do it.

About all the use they have for a text is to pin a sermon and a subject together, as a woman would use a hat pin.

Some years ago I went through a large spice mill, and was let into some of the secrets of the business by the manager, who was an old friend. He showed me a number of things that he said had nothing in them whatever of the thing they purported to be, except the name, and I couldn't help but think how much that was like some so-called preaching. If the pure food law applied to sermons, what a conglomeration there would be on some of the homiletic labels.

13. If the preacher is not sure that the Bible is the word of God he is greatly handicapped. Indeed, as much as a doctor would be if uncertain about the purity of his medicines. The man who would build up the faith of others must first wage a war of extermination against his own doubts. It must be a war to the death against Amalek. If we tear a single leaf out of the Bible we will soon throw away the whole book.

There was once a preacher who stirred up doubt in every sermon he preached by saying, "This does not mean just what it seems to say," or "It has been rejected by the most advanced scholarship," or "we have a passage here that is purely figurative."

Among those who heard him was a man who

always went home and literally tore out of his Bible what the preacher had rejected in his, until at last he walked into church one Sunday morning, with nothing left but a picture of the devil and the ten commandments.

Handing "the remains" to his relentless pastor he said, "Here's your Bible." "Why, what do you mean?" said the preacher. "I mean that this is all you have left me of this blessed book."

The man who builds his house on the sand shows the need of lunatic asylums with every brick he lays, and the preacher who tells people to have faith in God, and in the same breath does what he can to destroy the faith they have, is as sure to fail in the ministry as the sower of the wind is to reap the whirlwind.

14. Failure sometimes results from lack of courage. David's last words to Solomon were, "Be strong, and show thyself a man." The preacher needs backbone as much as he does brain. In giving her verse at Sunday-school, a little girl got it wrong. The verse was, "And the king had no spirit in him," but she gave it this way, "And the king had no *spine* in him."

The preacher must have a spine in him to do his work as God wants it done. The main reason why some men never get to be leaders in anything is because they haven't the courage to stand alone. They are afraid to take a step in advance of the line, for fear they will be shot at. They are afraid of what people will think, or the papers will say.

They are more afraid of the pointed finger than a woman is of a shotgun.

The man who sets out to lead others must have the courage to do a good deal of travelling alone. He must be willing to do the preaching God bids him without first looking into the pews to see who is going to be hit.

A courageous determination to go straight on in the course we know to be right is the Samson in us which keeps us from turning back when we hear the lions roar. It is the Columbus that keeps straight on until land is sighted. It is the Washington who saves the country, and the Lincoln who preserves it. The man who has a courage that never forsakes him is bound to be somebody after a while, but the faint heart that gives up at the sight of the enemy will never get to the front in any battle.

The man of courage is as certain to go forward and upward as bad news is to spread. You can't turn him back by telling him the way is full of lions. What does he care for lions? Why, lions are his golden opportunities, for to him the roar of the lion is the first call for dinner in the dining car. All the lion can do against the man of courage is to roar, and the greater the roar the bigger the beehive, and the sweeter the honey that will come out of it.

15. Closely allied to lack of courage is lack of faith, for faith gives courage as nothing else can. If we have a faith that believes in God's word as the merchant believes in his check-book, difficulties will

fade away before us as dew before sunshine. If we believe that the Great Captain of the Lord's host is with us, and leading the way, we can march with confidence around the walls of every Jericho, and feel as well assured that they will go down as that the sun will shine to-morrow. If we have our feet well shod with the immutable word of our God, we will not slip and limp and stumble in half-heartedness whenever we come to a hill of difficulty.

If we believe that God is an ever-present help, and that all things are possible to him that believeth, we will not show the white feather when we see the horses and chariots and the big army. The sight of a giant will not make our knees knock together like those of King Saul.

If we believe in God at all, we ought to believe that He is able to bring us off more than conquerors, no matter who or what is against us. If God be for us, what does it matter about the bars of iron and the gates of brass? Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds, but it was through faith in his God that he broke the iron hand of Pharaoh, rolled away the sea, and fed a great army in the wilderness. If faith in God could bring bread from heaven then, and water out of the flinty rock, it can do so now, for the promise, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," is still in force, and if it means anything at all it means house rent and board anywhere in the world to the man who will meet the conditions.

Let the preacher be a man of faith, and he will be able to move every mountain that blocks his way. The Twenty-third Psalm and God's promises to the man who will trust in Him were not put in the Bible to fill up, and yet some of us preach as if we thought so.

16. Some failures occur in the ministry through lack in spiritual qualifications. Sometimes the preacher does not have an experimental knowledge of the power of the Gospel he tries to preach, and this makes him a Samson with his hair cut. He does not know any more about the real meaning of spiritual life than the town pump does about the taste of water, and he cannot know it because he has not been born from above. He is a blind man trying to lead the blind. His only knowledge of God is an intellectual conception of some of His attributes.

He does not know God in his own heart and life. All he knows of Christ has been gleaned from books. Of course such a preacher can no more minister to the soul needs of his people than he can communicate his thoughts in an unknown tongue. The preacher must have a positive and satisfying knowledge of godliness before he can cause in others a hunger and thirst after righteousness.

17. Another spiritual drawback is lack of prayer. The man of God should be a man who walks and talks with God. When Jesus prayed all night the multitude sought Him in the morning. If some of us took more time to pray it wouldn't take us so long to make our sermons, and there would be more

power in them after they were made. The trolley car can run down-hill without connection with the power house, but it cannot go an inch the other way, and it may be somewhat that way with the preacher.

I doubt if a revival has ever been known that did not begin in an atmosphere of prayer. Nothing can give us such a realizing sense of the presence of our divine Master, and that of itself ought to be sufficient reason to make us prayerful. Abraham endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and so can we, if we will meet the conditions. Perhaps if we would pray more we wouldn't have to preach so much. I wish we might all give it an earnest and faithful trial.

18. One more reason for failure, that I will mention, is not being filled with the Holy Ghost. As well undertake to run an engine without steam, or a trolley car without electricity, or a mill without power, as hope for a successful ministry without the Holy Ghost. We see how true this was in the case of Apollos, and it has been just as true with every other preacher not filled with the Spirit from his day to ours.

Apollos had much in the way of ministerial qualification that many preachers do not have, and yet those who heard him were not much benefited by his ministry until after he received the Holy Ghost. He was learned, eloquent, well posted in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit and full of zeal, and yet his ministry was a failure.

I think we can all agree in this: That no matter

what a man's gifts may be; no matter how well he knows his Bible, his life will not have much power in it for God unless he is filled with the Holy Spirit. We have all heard men preach who could almost touch the stars, and yet there was no more heart power in what they said than in the playing of a music box.

Power with God and power with men can only come through the Holy Spirit. Every one who has ever tried to win a soul for Christ knows that it cannot be done without the power that comes from above. As well try to make a photograph without light. If we would have success in our ministry then, we must have the Holy Ghost.

The last promise of Jesus before Pentecost was, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever," and His last promise before His ascension was, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." His last thought before going to the cross, and His last thought in going to the right hand of the Father, were the same. The promise of the Spirit, and we may be sure His promise at these times was for that most needed.

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all they quickening power;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

VII

WHY SOME MINISTERS SUCCEED

A COLORED man said he could talk more religion at class-meeting in ten minutes than he could live in six weeks, and I am quite sure that in many things we are often made to feel our limitations just as keenly, though few of us are as frank in admitting it as was the colored brother. It is much easier to talk about things we have seen done than it is to show how they were brought to pass.

We can easily say that a thing was done, but to explain how it was done is a horse of a different color. A child can say that the sun shines, but it takes more than human wisdom to explain how it does it. That a house is a house may be realized at a glance, and is conclusive evidence that it stands on a solid foundation of some kind, but it will take more than a glimpse from an automobile or a street-car to tell us how deep the foundation goes down, or what kind of material it contains. And yet we know the structure is standing to-day because it was not built on the sand yesterday.

The same is true of all success in the ministry. Underlying it is a good foundation of some kind, for success is no more accidental than a house is accidental. Both are built from plans of some sort, and

according to principles of some kind. Both have been the result of careful thought and intelligent purpose. Back of all success there has been an earnest determination to succeed. There has been careful and persistent preparation, tireless effort; hope, faith: a fervent spirit and a proper ambition, without which there can be no success in anything.

I would say then, first of all, that some men succeed in the ministry because they went into the ministry intending to succeed. They counted upon it from the beginning. They had a deliberate, definite purpose to succeed, as certainly as David expected to bring down Goliath with his sling.

At a camp-meeting the man who did the preaching gave an invitation for those seeking blessing to go forward. One man went forward and knelt down, when a worker got down beside him and said:

"What is it you are seeking, brother?"

The man looked up vacantly and said:

"Oh, nothin' in pertickler."

But the man in the ministry who doesn't want anything in particular never gets anywhere. He wabbles all over creation like a boy learning to ride a bicycle. Crooked paths are not made by those who are determined to go straight on in spite of difficulties. An ordinary man with a great purpose is certain to accomplish more in life than an extraordinary man who has no purpose. It is not the man with the best gun who bags the most birds, but the one whose aim is the best.

When Alexander the Great was asked how he had

conquered the world, he replied, "By not wavering." And singleness of aim rigidly adhered to is certain, sooner or later, to rule the world it sets out to conquer. Many are called and few are chosen, for the reason that so many stop at the first shade tree, because the road ahead looks so hot and dusty. Pliable turned back at the Slough of Despond because he didn't start for the Celestial City. He only set out to go with Christian. On the day that an eminent man entered college he nailed a big V over the door of his room. It meant that he was after the Valedictory, and he got it.

"Let thine eyes look straight on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor the left; remove thy foot from evil."

This is God's finger-board to success in everything, from steering a flatboat to ruling a kingdom. There is more hope for a fool than for the man who isn't trying to get anywhere, and this will hold good in the ministry or out of it. Nothing but a right, real and definite purpose in life can keep any man keyed up to concert pitch, and in constant shape to do his best.

A great many men succeed in the ministry because they are good pastors. They know their sheep, and are known of them, and try to take good care of them. Not very long ago I heard a man who ranks high as a pastor give this brief from his experience. He said:

"When beginning a new pastorate I make my

first round of visits as rapidly as possible, so that I may know in the main who my members are and where they live, with such other serviceable information as I may be able to obtain. In this first visit, for instance, I call at the house of Mr. John Smith. His wife and their little daughter Mary Alice are at home. I talk almost entirely about family affairs—the most interesting subject in the world to every wife and mother.

"I soon learn that there are four other children, two girls and two boys. Three of them are at school. The oldest boy is clerking in a grocery store. He has been there six months, and likes the business very well. The other boy is a great student, the fond mother says, and is at the head of his class in school. The husband is a lawyer, and his office is in such a building. From the mother I soon learn the full names of all the children, their ages and birthdays.

"I pay particular attention to the faces and voices of the mother and the girl at home. If a child has a double name I learn by which it is called in the family, and whenever I see it afterward I call it by that name. The child present is called Alice, not Mary Alice or Mary, but Alice only, and so she at once becomes Alice to me. I must never make the mistake of calling her anything else, or forget her name. You are a great preacher to a child as soon as it finds out that you know it by name. I put down in my note-book all the information gained there and go on to another house.

"That evening, while all is still fresh in my mind, I take out my note-book and go over the information, item by item, clearly fixing it in my mind. Then I take a few minutes for each family, in which I recall the faces and voices of those I have seen, until they are indelibly fixed in my mind so clearly that I would know them in Damascus.

"The next Sunday at church I run my eye over my congregation, and note how many of those I have seen are present. I see Mrs. Smith and Alice, and by a little effort of the mind deepen the impression that her name is Mary Alice, but that she is called Alice. The rest of the family are all present, and knowing their ages, I have little difficulty in fixing their names. When any are absent I am sure to notice it and ask about them by name.

"I shake hands with Mrs. Smith and Alice, calling each by name, and before the mother has had time to introduce me to the others, I have taken each one by the hand and called them by name, which of course rather startles them. I have something to say to Mr. Smith about the law, and do not forget to say a word to Tommy about the store, and tell him I will be in to see him some day before long. This makes him think that he is somebody in the preacher's estimation.

"When I afterward call at the store to see one of the proprietors, who is one of my members, I do not forget that Tommy is there, and take time to see him. I never forget that children and young people like to receive attention as much as older ones. When

I learn that certain people are related to certain other folks, I do not forget that it is a good thing to know, and make a note of it.

"I also keep a birthday book, in which I record the birthday of every child in my congregation, and I never let a birthday pass unnoticed. At the beginning of each month I note the birthdays it contains. I write a suitable letter to each child, taking a great deal of pains with my penmanship, using the blackest ink, and doing my best to make the letter look enough like copper-plate to frame.

"This letter I mail the evening before the birthday, addressed to the child in its own name, so that it will be received by the morning delivery. Most likely this will be the first letter the little one has ever received, and so it will make a lasting impression. It can never forget that letter. The next year the boy or girl will be out looking for the postman when he comes, and now I have established a permanent interest with that child. It may forget others, but it will not forget me. I make it almost a part of my religion never to forget the name of one of my children, or neglect to remember it on its birthday. I try also to learn as much as possible of its disposition and characteristics.

"When I baptize children I never have to ask their names at the time. With a child old enough to notice that is almost an unpardonable sin. I know the children about as well as I do their parents, and they know me. When I am going to baptize babies I go to see them two or three times beforehand, so

that I will not frighten them by being strange to them. I take them in my arms and have a little play with them. I can hardly remember when I have had one cry at the time of baptism.

"I understand my call to be as much to the children as to their parents, and it is a big part of my business in the ministry to win them to Christ. Results with adults are very uncertain, but not so with children. The children are all the friends of Jesus, and will gladly give Him their hearts if we do not get in their way. A blunder with a child is the worst blunder that can be made.

"When I talk religion to a boy I do not forget that he is a boy and not a doctor of divinity. If he is ever converted I know that he will have to get religion as a boy, and not as an old man. With a touch here and there, as I have opportunity, I do my best to help the children along to their hour of decision. Everything I do has this in view. I invite their confidence, and try to draw them out to tell me their impressions and opinions of religious things.

"I don't think there is anything in the world I would rather do than talk religion with a child. Children are all doing a great deal more thinking than we give them credit for, and parents often do their little ones much harm by showing indifference or making light of what to the children are matters of the greatest concern. Nothing that a child says should ever be treated with ridicule.

"If children do well at school I let them know that I know it, and am glad of it. Children love expres-

sions of approval as well as we do, but too many little ones never hear the word of cheer for which they long. When they graduate I write them a nice and encouraging letter, by which I hope to inspire them to strive for noble things.

"I do not let important family matters pass unnoticed, even after I have gone to another pastorate. If there is a wedding or a death, or a misfortune, or any uncommon occurrence I write or send a telegram, with a prayerful hope that in this way I may carry out the divine injunction, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.'"

"But these things take time," you say. Yes, a great deal of it, but it is time well spent, and will do much to make amends for whatever lack there may be in the preaching. The best sermons we can preach are certain to be picked into shreds by somebody, but love that is real and working at its trade of trying to make the world better has nothing to fear from criticism. It doesn't take a ten talent man to succeed as a pastor on this plan.

In doing such work as that just indicated, and in fact all kinds of pastoral work, I believe the card system for preserving information will be found most serviceable. It is now largely and generally used in all kinds of business, as being about the best system yet devised. It is elastic and flexible, and has the advantage of always being right at hand, something that cannot be said of a note-book five or ten years old.

A few cards for use as needed can be carried in

the pocket, and then put away in an alphabetical case when filled out, to be found afterward at a moment's notice. Notes about everything in a pastor's work can be kept by this system, and all the cards filed in the same case. Any additional information needed on this matter can be obtained at almost any business house.

Some men succeed in the ministry because of their oratorical ability. Oratory of every kind has a great charm for all manner of people. We all like to hear the man who can make the thrills run over us and through us, no matter whether he is talking religion or politics. Both the educated and the illiterate are charmed by the music of eloquent speech, and they will put everything else out of the way to go and hear the man who can stir them in their feelings and sway them in their emotions. The orator is perhaps more certain to have the success of large congregations than almost any other kind of preacher.

This was remarkably true of Whitefield. For thirty years he was listened to with breathless interest in both hemispheres, and thousands upon thousands turned out to hear him wherever he preached, no matter on what day of the week, or at what hour he spoke. He swayed multitudes with power like magic. His first sermon was preached before he was scarcely out of his boyhood, and it was reported to his bishop that it had driven fifteen people mad. From that day on the power of his oratory was phenomenal. The coldest natures would warm up and fairly melt under his preaching. Multitudes num-

bering thousands would hang on his lips for hours, sometimes through pelting rain or far into the night, standing around him as if entranced, and unable to tear themselves away and sometimes breaking into cries and groans that almost drowned his voice.

Not only the unlettered, but men of the highest culture yielded to the fascination of his speech. The cold and skeptical Hume declared that he would go twenty miles on foot to hear him preach. Even the cold and unimpassioned Benjamin Franklin caught fire from his burning woods, with this result:

"I perceived," he says, "that he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three silver dollars and some gold. As he proceeded I began to soften and concluded to give him the copper. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and I determined to give the silver, but when he finished I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

Another man who went to hear the same sermon feared that he might be carried away and have to give too much, and so he left his money all at home, but before the sermon was ended he borrowed of a neighbor and gave liberally. This would seem to bear out what the old lady said when the baby swallowed a quarter: "Run for the Methodist preacher, for if there's anybody that kin git money out of folks in a hurry it's him."

If, however, none but great orators like Whitefield ever succeeded in the ministry, how hopelessly dis-

couraging it would be for the rest of us. Where an unusual gift of oratory brings one minister success thousands of others manage to get to the top of the ladder without it. And so any of us may gird up our loins with holy determination to accomplish all that we have the God-given power to achieve, and start up the steep hillside, each bearing in his own way his little banner "Excelsior."

Other men succeed in the ministry because there is a charm about their preaching that insures their having a large hearing, and I am not talking about star preachers just now either. If you endeavor to analyze their preaching to discover the secret of its power you are all at sea. They appear to very closely resemble other men who were failures in the pulpit. It is as difficult to determine why this is so as it is to tell why two churches built on the same plan are sometimes so different in their acoustic properties, or why two violins that seem to be alike differ so in tone.

The men of whom I am speaking have no great gifts of oratory, and have no more personal magnetism than the average man, but they keep everybody wide awake, and you do not hear much said about their sermons being too long. Among the most successful preachers everywhere, you will find some of this kind. Men for whom churches are always asking, and yet it is not an easy matter to say just what it is that brings this success. There is one thing, however, that can always be said of such preachers, and that is that their sermons are interest-

ing. No matter what their subject may be, they get something out of it that chains attention. They have something to say that takes hold of you and makes you sit up and take notice in spite of yourself.

Those parts of the Bible from which they get their sermons and illustrations have new interest for you, and you wonder why you never saw it after that fashion before. The voice of the preacher may not be musical or very melodious, or very skillfully handled, and his gestures may sometimes be quite the opposite of what they should be, but the congregation is wide awake, and nobody is in a hurry for meeting to let out. If anybody goes to church tired he soon forgets it or becomes rested, and if anybody is there to criticize he soon forgets what he went for. Why is he so interesting? Well, it's hard to say, but there is one thing certain, he is saying something that the people have an interest in, and he is saying it in an interesting way.

There are some things that people like to hear about, and others that they do not. A stuttering man was trying to make love to a girl—a thing with which stuttering is apt to interfere somewhat, I have been told. The poor man had evidently been saturating himself with the song of Solomon, for he was trying to express himself in a very beautiful and metaphorical way, but he had scarcely got started when the trolley flew off, and his train of expression began to slow down in a punctured tire sort of way, as he said:

"Your t-t-teeth are l-l-like p-p-earls, and y-your

eyes w-would shed—w-w-w-ould shed ——" when the girl broke out impatiently:

"Never mind the wood-shed, John; go on with the pretty talk."

When we tell people about things in which they have great interest minor matters must get out of the way. I don't know who is to blame if he is not interesting, unless it is the preacher himself, for he certainly has the most interesting book in the world to preach from, and the most interesting man who ever lived to preach about, and the most interesting of all causes to preach for, and if he cannot keep the people from going to sleep on his hands certainly there is something wrong. Somebody once asked Beecher what he would do if he should see anybody going to sleep in his congregation, and he said:

"The janitor of this church has imperative orders, if he sees anybody asleep in the pews, to go right up into the pulpit and awaken the preacher."

There will generally be a wide-awake congregation where there is a wide-awake preacher. It looks as if almost any sort of a preacher ought to be able to get enough Bible in his sermon to make it interesting, and yet it is, alas, too true that some do not.

As a general thing we can be interesting in anything we know a great deal about. At a great Chautauqua Assembly a man held a large congregation spellbound for hours, in hearing what he had to say about a rat. Think of it! A thing as common and detestable as a rat! And yet on the greatest

of all themes—the redemption of a fallen world—people will yawn in your face!

At a summer resort in Indiana a naturalist goes about through the grounds at five o'clock in the morning, talking about birds, and hundreds of people leave their beds and follow him around to catch everything he says. Is he a great orator? No, not at all; but he knows all about birds, and can say a thousand things about them that the people want to hear.

If he went about talking platitudes in a humdrum way, nobody would care to hear him, but he tells about things that are living and skipping and hopping and singing in plain sight, and he does it in a way that can be understood and remembered, and that is why he gets a crowd.

Let the preacher know his Bible as that man knows birds, and he will not have to nearly kill himself in trying to get a few people to go and hear him preach.

Some time ago I heard a man put in a quarter of an hour in telling some of the wonders about the eye of a fly, and a great crowded audience hardly breathed while he was doing it, and yet by the time some men have been preaching fifteen minutes people begin to pull out their watches and shut them with a snap. If we tell an interesting thing in an interesting way we will be listened to with interest. Darwin wrote a book on angleworms that takes hold of the attention and holds it like a romance.

Some preachers are interesting because they see things so clearly themselves, and are able to make

others see them just as plainly. I once asked a man of this kind why it was he could express himself so clearly that the people caught every thought. He said he believed it was because he saw so clearly himself the thing he was trying to present. He said:

"I never try to describe anything without having it clearly in my own mind. If I talk about a house I see a house. If I describe a room I am in it, and see everything it contains. The carpet, the furniture, the grate, the fire, the pictures, the bric-à-brac, the paper on the wall, the windows and doors—everything—and for the moment it is all real to me. If I am talking about a landscape it is the same. The whole view is before me. The trees, the fields, the hills, the stream, the cattle grazing in the meadow, the children going to school, the house on the hillside, and the church spire in the distance. So that all I have to do is to tell the people just what I see, and they see it too."

When things are real to the preacher there will be a reality in his preaching. I have been told that the best actors are those who most fully forget themselves for the time being, and seem for the moment to be the characters they are trying to impersonate.

The preacher who would be interesting needs imagination to give life to what he says. People in the main have but little imagination, and one who can take thought in the abstract and give it tangible form becomes a creator to them. To be able to paint with words so that the listener can see the things about

which he is hearing is a great gift, and should be cultivated by every preacher.

I once heard Bishop Fowler preach on Moses, and in the course of his sermon he almost frescoed the ceiling of the church with scenes from the life of that great man.

"If I were a great painter," said he, "I would like to put over in this corner a picture of the mother in her little cabin of a home, weaving from the willows she had gathered with a heavy heart the little ark with which by God's help she was to save her child. And just beside it there, I would draw another picture of the little sister keeping watch, from a sheltered nook not far away, with the little home and the retreating figure of the weeping mother in the background."

And so he went on, with picture after picture, until the people all over the house began to turn their faces toward the ceiling, as if they could actually see the pictures being painted there. People who do not have an extensive vocabulary do much of their thinking in pictures. The language of the Indian is a language of imagery, and there is something about all of us that likes to have thought so presented that we can see it with the mind's eye. It is because of this that Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is so fascinating. It makes Christian experience visible.

A man who can scarcely draw a straight line can give a chalk talk that will hold everybody spellbound. We have all seen it done. A well-known figure in

Chicago some years ago was a boy who drew pictures on the sidewalk with colored crayons, and he always had a great crowd around him. This should be suggestive to the preacher, for it shows how people are attracted by pictures. That is why the " movies " are taking the country, and preaching will become more popular when more preachers learn how to preach in pictures.

I doubt if any one thing will do more to make sermons interesting than a wise and liberal use of illustrations. Even the most ordinary preacher can add greatly to his pulpit power in this way. Just as a book that looks very dry, and would hardly be taken up the second time, may be changed into a very attractive volume by a few bright pictures, so many a sermon may be greatly improved by a few telling illustrations. In addition to illuminating the thought good illustrations have another great advantage, not often thought of, and that is they make good baskets to carry the bread home in.

Some preaching is never remembered because there is nothing to take hold of it by. It is like trying to carry a box mattress that has no straps. Illustrations help to bring up the thought so that the sermon can be recalled. The sermons we all remember the best are those that were best illustrated.

In our day you can go to the store and buy almost anything, and they will give you something to carry it home in. Butter, oysters, eggs, milk—anything, —and it ought to be somewhat that way with the preaching. It was that way with the sermons of the

Master. He made it impossible to forget them. You can't look at a grape-vine without having the fifteenth chapter of John come into your mind. When Jesus saw a farmer come into His congregation He knew that the man did his thinking in things that were familiar to his farm life, and so He fixed up a little basket for him to carry something home to his family in by saying:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a sower who went forth to sow," and the farmer was all ears in an instant, and he no doubt said to himself: "Why, how plain that is. I never saw it that way before," and he would remember what he heard that day as long as he lived, and could explain it to his wife and children.

The preacher should not only preach for the present moment, but for all time to come as well, by filling his sermons with associative illustrations that will be continually bringing them up in the mind again.

I doubt if anything can do so much to make preaching interesting as to have it come largely from the Bible. Bible themes and Bible characters are certain to give life to a sermon, and make it take hold of the attention as nothing else can possibly do. To tell a Bible story even passably well will wake up a sleepy congregation at once.

Bible stories never wear out and never grow old, but are new every time they are told. No matter how often they are heard there is always a newness and freshness about them. They are like the beauty

of color and form in a familiar landscape, which takes on a new beauty with new light, and every time we look upon it we see something not before noticed. The Bible is never a dull book when read with a full realization that it is the word of God.

I once knew a man who had charge of a mission on a crowded street in a busy city. Before beginning the service in the evening he would always give a talk at the curbstone in front of the mission. A boiler factory would not have been a much more difficult place in which to get and hold attention. One day I said to him:

"How can you ever do anything in the midst of all that noise and confusion?"

"No trouble about that," he replied. "Nobody will ever leave you while you are talking about Jesus Christ."

With that for a pointer I went back the next evening to study his open air meeting, and I found it even as he had said. All he had to say was about Christ. He didn't give his own opinions or conclusions about anything, but talked altogether about the Man of Galilee. He either gave something Jesus had said, or told in a very graphic way about something He had done.

I very closely watched the effect of all this on the crowd. I would select certain individuals and closely observe them. Everybody I noticed was giving close and respectful attention. A newcomer was certain to press up as close to the speaker as he could get, and lean forward to hear.

Here, for instance, would come a workman on his way home, with his dinner pail on his arm. He would pause in an uncertain way, as if he only intended to stop a moment, but presently he would begin to hitch up closer, and if the speaker were giving a parable or describing a miracle the man would never move until the matter was finished.

From that day to this I have noticed that the preacher who packs his sermon with Bible material is always interesting, and there is no complaining that his sermons are too long, and especially is this true of the preacher who in a real sense fills his sermons with Christ. If we would get more of our preaching from the Bible, and not so much from new books and magazines, the question of how to reach the masses wouldn't make so many men bald.

Some men succeed in the ministry because their preaching is always suitable. They have the knack of always hitting the nail on the head. There is a striking appropriateness in every sermon. Such men have keen discernment, and seem to know almost intuitively what should be said. Others there are who are just as unfortunate in an opposite way, like one I heard of in Ohio, who was always putting his foot in it.

At one time a prominent man died whose moral character was not all that could have been desired, but being wealthy, and having a secret society funeral, there was a great turnout. The preacher took a text that was red-hot to begin with, and landed the departed in the pit without any ifs and

ands about it. This of course raised a great commotion in the community, and set every idle tongue wagging.

Soon afterward about the best man in the community died, and being a member of the undiscerning preacher's church, the widow was in consternation over what might happen at the funeral. So she sent for the preacher, and begged him with streaming eyes to be very careful about what he said, and not say anything that would make a town talk, as the other funeral had done. He assured her that she need have no anxiety, for he would weigh his words well.

When his turn came at the funeral, he looked very sober, cleared his throat and said:

"Dear friends, the widow and myself have been having a long serious consultation over the matter, and we have both come to the conclusion that the less said about this man the better, and so we will sing a hymn and go to the graveyard," and that was all he had to say.

This man always had great crowds to hear him, because no prophet could ever tell what he would say, and every sermon was a sensation, but we all know that no such ministry could be successful. But the discerning preacher recognizes the fitness of things, and there is an aptness about his preaching that all at once recognize. Skill in personal carriage has much to do with a man's weal or woe in many things.

Some men get to the top in the ministry largely on account of their tact. They are not great

preachers or great pastors, or in fact great at anything, but in essential things they are as wise as the serpent and as harmless as the dove. Others there are who are kept out in the cold mainly because they have never learned to rub the fur the right way. I knew one man who was a great preacher, but he was an utter failure in the ministry because he offended people right and left. A leading member of his church said to me:

"Dr. Blank is the greatest preacher we ever had, and if we only had a trap-door in the pulpit, so that we could drop him out of sight the moment he pronounces the benediction, we would want to keep him all his life, but he kicks everything over before he reaches the front door."

The art of pleasing is the art of going up-stairs in everything, from sweeping a street to preaching the Gospel, and the tactful man is the one who knows how to please, for he is careful to avoid saying or doing the things that displease. An agreeable manner is as much a real asset in the business of life as a bank account.

It has been well said that we sometimes meet men who would have invented good manners had they not already been in existence, and I believe this may be found true in the ministry more frequently than in any other calling.

When Lincoln was making his first race for the legislature, he went to solicit the votes of thirty men who were harvesting in a wheat field. He didn't make a speech or any promises to them, but taking

up a grain cradle he led the gang around the field, and every last man of them voted for him. That was tact.

Mark Twain tells of a preacher who was making a great appeal for the missionary cause.

"At the end of ten minutes," said the humorist, "I was stirred to my boot-heels, and wanted him to stop so that I could give twenty-five dollars before my heart broke. But he kept on, and in ten minutes more I began to find my feet getting cold, and I only wanted to give fifteen dollars. In another ten minutes I only wanted to give five, but he didn't stop then, and when the collection was finally taken I stole two dollars out of the basket."

The preacher often defeats his own ends because he hasn't the tact to stop quite soon enough.

I knew a Methodist preacher who has for years been filling some of the best appointments in his Conference, much to my surprise, for he didn't seem to be much of a preacher. Some time ago I inquired of a man in a church he had served for six years what was the secret of his success, and he instantly replied:

"Common sense, sir; common sense. He can't preach much, and we've had much better pastors in some ways, but I never saw a preacher who could hold a candle to him in tact and gumption. He never stuck a splinter into anybody while he was with us, and he pulled out a lot that some of our other preachers had planted."

Some preachers reach a high place in the ministry

because of their close and constant application to their duties. They feel that their calling is a high and sacred one—as every minister should—and they are determined to put into it the highest and best of which they are capable. Nothing in their ministry is to them small or trivial. To pray with the sick is as great a duty as to preach to a big congregation.

One preacher of this kind whom I knew made it a rule never to be absent from his prayer-meeting, and I knew of his once shortening a visit and travelling nearly a hundred miles to be there. With such a man it of course soon becomes known among his people that he is to be depended upon. With such men it is, "This one thing I do." They accomplish much because they concentrate their efforts.

Many a man of brilliant gifts brings little to pass because he spreads himself too much. Like a man who set about cooking his dinner in a prairie country. He started a fire, on which he placed his coffee-pot. He then put some strips of bacon in a frying-pan and held it over the fire alongside of the coffee-pot. But presently the grass took fire, and he began following it up with his frying-pan, thinking it was hotter there, but by the time his bacon was fried he was a quarter of a mile from his coffee-pot. And in that you have the reason why some men are where they are in the ministry. They get too far away from their coffee-pot.

Some preachers reach the pinnacle of success be-

cause they are so full of enthusiasm, and are able to inspire the same glowing expectation in others. They are like the cob stoves in Kansas. As soon as they begin business on a cold morning winter is gone. When such preachers set out to pay off a church debt, or build a new parsonage, or organize a brotherhood, or get up a Young People's Convention, they take with them such an air of confidence that everybody they meet is touched with the same spirit, and things go through with a whirl.

Things can never be dark to them, for they can always find a bright side somewhere, and they can make others see it too. Every great thing in the world has been accomplished by somebody's enthusiasm, and to the enthusiastic man God always seems to put the giants on the bill of fare, as He did for Caleb and Joshua.

"They shall be bread for you."

Difficulties melt before them like dew before the sunshine. It was largely because of Paul's undaunted enthusiasm that he was able to plant churches everywhere. He was so filled with radiant zeal that people had to do as he said. We have all known preachers who didn't know a note from a horse-fly, and about the only thing in their sermons that was like preaching was the text, but how they would make things go. Congregations would be large. Galleries that hadn't been used for years would have to be dusted out, and chairs brought in. The membership would soon double, debts would be paid off, the benevolences easily raised,

and a half dozen other places wanting that preacher. What did it? Enthusiasm like a house afire.

"How many fish have you caught, Tommy?"

"When I get this one that's a-goin' to bite now and two more I'll have three." That was enthusiasm.

Very closely related to this class are the preachers who succeed through sheer earnestness. They may be handicapped in every conceivable way, but nothing daunts them, and nothing ever does completely overwhelm the man who is thoroughly in earnest.

The man who is in earnest is bound to be somebody after a while, no matter how poor a chance he has. If he has no chance he will make one.

Somebody has said that an earnest man in a town is like the itch, for he makes everybody around him scratch. The man who said this may not have been a poet, but he knew beans when he saw them, for the expression is as true as it is homely.

There is no more positive way of being a failure than by being neither one thing nor the other—neither cold nor hot. What is the good of having a head of gold if the feet are to be neither clay nor iron? If the lion couldn't do anything but roar he might as well be a ground squirrel.

It was said of David while he was still a shepherd boy that he was a mighty valiant man and a man of war. He was in earnest and carpeting his room with lion and bear skins. He was taking a stand and maintaining it. He was overcoming something. The man who has plenty of iron in his blood cannot be kept away from the front.

Some preachers give up and plod along in clod-hopper fashion all their days, because they are disheartened by thinking they are hidden in obscurity, where they have no chance. But don't let that trouble you for a moment, brother, for obscurity is one of the best friends greatness ever had. It wasn't in the way of Lincoln or Garfield. It couldn't keep Franklin or Edison down. Count over the great names of history, in the ministry and out of it, and see how many have come up through great tribulation out of obscurity.

There is no better place in which to build a character that will shine than in obscurity, for as Emerson has well said: "Let a man write a better book, or preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap than his neighbor, and though he build his house in the wilderness the world will make a beaten path to his door."

The battle is not won because the army looks well on dress parade, but because of what has been well done in camp, and drill, and march. Victory comes, not because the general has a fine plume and a shining sword, but because of the rigid discipline and thorough training of the private soldier.

So don't worry about your obscurity, brother preacher, for if there is gold in you it will sooner or later have a chance to shine. The quickest and surest way to get a big place is to more than fill a little one.

"Seest thou a man who is diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings."

VIII

AN OLD TESTAMENT PREACHER*

AMONG the faithful men of God in the Old Testament whose lives the preacher of today may study with inspiration and profit, I doubt if any will yield a richer return for the time spent than that of the rugged and fearless man who is introduced with the simple announcement that he is Elijah the Tishbite. The man who instinctively pieces himself out with high heels and a plug hat grows hot under the collar if he is introduced with his front portico and back stairs left off, but the real big man never cares whether anything is said about his size or not.

Elijah comes before us without any varnish or veneer, but we do not have to be told to take off our hats. When some folks introduce a lion to a lamb they think it necessary to call attention to mane and tail, but the Bible does nothing of that kind. Indeed, God's way of introducing a great man is always godlike.

The man is put down on the stage of action and allowed to speak for himself. There is no blare of trumpets as he comes in. He walks out from the unknown as quietly as creation came out of chaos, and is left to declare himself and make way for himself.

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The brevity of the Bible is sublime. Not many words are used in introducing a man, but chapters are devoted to telling what he does, when he does well. The Lord shows plainly what is important by where He puts the italics. The great prophet who is the theme of our thought is introduced in a breath, but chapters are devoted to telling us what he did.

At our first introduction to this rugged and sturdy man of God, he seems to have been having a hard time on a city appointment that was more than he could handle. Religion was at low tide when he preached his first sermon in Samaria, and it didn't rise any during his stay there. The oldest inhabitant couldn't remember when there had been a revival, and the wonder is that Elijah didn't begin hunting for juniper berries much sooner than he did. He was located in a very genteel part of the city and had some remarkably influential people on his visiting list, but he seems to have been unable to blend the elements, or to reach the masses, and so a change in his field of labor was deemed advisable.

In the next scene, therefore, we see him receiving an appointment from the Jordan Conference to the Cherith Circuit, to which he went with a spirit of such uncomplaining obedience that we instinctively hold up our hands in wondering admiration, for the prospect before him was about the least inviting upon which a man of God ever entered, and yet he moved without a murmur, and performed his part so well in his new charge that he was permitted to stay the full three years' term on that work.

There wasn't even a suggestion of salary in sight, and yet he stepped off as spry as if he were going to a banner appointment. To deliver him from uneasiness about his support, however, he was told that the ravens had been commanded to feed him there, a duty which they performed with a faithfulness and regularity that ought to make some of our church boards ashamed of themselves. No man with a pocketful of money ever went to market with any less concern than the prophet set out for the Brook Cherith when this fact was made known to him.

There are preachers who would have given the ravens a holiday to begin with, while they sat down to study about the matter, but Elijah went to packing up without a moment's delay as soon as he got the word to move forward.

Before some of us would have been willing to begin uncording bedsteads and taking down stovepipe, we would have wanted to know something about Cherith, and whether the ravens of that country were reliable or not. We would have wanted to know whether they were many or few, and whether they were much given to quarrelling among themselves or no.

We would have asked all manner of questions about the particular ravens that were to keep us in breadstuff—how many of them were eminently respectable, and how many were just common birds.

These and a great many other things we would have insisted upon knowing before we raised a hand to begin packing our knapsacks. But all that Elijah

cared to know was that the Lord was to go with him, and he was ready to start as soon as he could gird up his loins and put on his sandals.

In the prophet's instructions for Cherith he was charged to turn eastward and hide himself, a charge that every preacher should strive to follow to the very letter. If we will but keep our faces fixed steadily upon the source of light, and hide ourselves behind the cross success is bound to come sooner or later.

Elijah was also told to drink of the brook, which was to afford him an ample supply while he remained there. Every preacher should drink of the brook by the side of which God places him. Its life should become his. To help people we must mingle with them, be of them, and know them. The man who takes no interest in the hopes, the plans and the life aims of those to whom he preaches will soon find out that nobody is being helped toward heaven by what he says in the pulpit.

The same trust and unquestioning obedience was also manifest on the part of Elijah when he got his marching orders for Zarephath, where he had been told a poor widow was to take the place of the ravens in preparing his meals for him.

There are a good many preachers living to-day who would have been scared clear out of the ministry by just one look into that poor woman's flour barrel, but the late pastor of Cherith had no concern about the matter, because he had found out by past experience some of the wonderful things his God could do whenever there was need for doing them.

He had never had his meals served more promptly in his life than during the time he put in on the Cherith Circuit. His mother may have forgotten him, and been late with his breakfast now and then, but his God never failed him, and the same God is still willing to take upon Himself the support of the preacher who will preach the preaching that He bids him.

Brethren, if it was safe for Elijah to leave the bread question with the Lord, why isn't it safe for us to do it? God made the ravens prepare a table for him with as much precision as the sun rose and set. It didn't make any difference where those birds were or what they were doing, they had to drop everything else and take the prophet bread and flesh every night and morning—Fridays and Lent included—and no preacher who looks after his own appointments has ever found a place where he had his marketing done any more acceptably than those ravens did it for Elijah.

The first noticeable thing in the ministry of the great prophet is that he always lived on his work, and put in all his time right where the Lord had placed him. We do not hear of his taking any summer vacations—aside from his excursion to the juniper tree—or of his spending a large part of his time in lecturing, or in looking after his farm somewhere. Though it must be admitted that he did at one time preëmpt a small piece of depressed real estate in the vicinity of Horeb, to which he became strongly attached, but even this he was will-

ing to give up without a murmur when his unministerial conduct was pointed out at the next Conference.

The Tishbite seems to have been a man who never neglected his pastoral duties in trying to accumulate property, and he didn't feel that the first duty of a preacher's life is to get on the opposite side of the hill from the poorhouse, by paying special attention to the consideration of No. 1 every chance he gets. In visible assets he was so poor that he had nothing but a shabby blanket to leave his servant, and yet the arms of God were ever about him, and no good thing was ever denied him.

The peaceful spirit of the prophet's trust came out strong when the brook dried up and he was told to go to Zarephath. Some of us would have fallen back in the harness and got balky right there, and the Poor Widow Mission would have had to be undertaken by some man who had fat on his ribs to begin with, while we were travelling with long steps toward where the voice of the turtle could still be heard in the land. We would have put on a long face and said:

"I ought to have something better than that this time. For lo these many days I've been as good as buried among the crows down there at Cherith; without the sight of a single friendly face; a congregation full of croakers; dependent entirely upon donations for my support, and sustained by a monotony of fare that took away all appetite. I ought to have a better place this time, and justice to my health demands it. To have that poor widow and

her sickly boy confronting me every time I sat down to dinner, and know that every crumb I put in my mouth had been baked from the scrapings of her flour barrel would take all the inspiration out of me, and make my feet like lead in the pulpit. If I don't get a better place than that this time I'm afraid I shall have to go to peddling books or try the life insurance business."

But no such thoughts ever found a place in the mind of Elijah. The question with him wasn't where he would like to go, but, " Lord, where do you want me? " and with a manner as joyous as a psalm he picked up his saddle-bags and set out for Zarephath by the shortest route, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold there was the poor widow gathering sticks to cook his supper. God always has somebody preparing food for the man who is faithful.

Did it ever strike you, brethren, that whenever the Lord has wanted an instrument for important use He has always taken somebody who was already busy? But when the devil wants a helper he takes the first loafer he can get his hands on, but God has never had any use for a lazy man.

A handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse wasn't much from a human standpoint, but it was all the Lord needed to sustain His prophet and the family of the faithful widow until harvest came again. It would make us all braver in our preaching to remember that a little with God has always been enough.

The Lord could just as easily have sent Elijah to

be entertained by the Lord Mayor of Zidon, but He glorified Himself the more, and at the same time sustained the faithful widow and her son, by sending the prophet to be entertained by her instead. It may also be that this was to teach people who never want to keep a preacher over night something to their advantage, for there are a good many plain hints in the Bible that nobody can lose anything by having a godly man for a boarder.

But let us notice the new preacher's greeting to his hostess:

"Bring me, I pray thee, a little morsel of bread in thy hand."

If preachers would only carry the same spirit of consideration with them in their pastoral visiting they would never lack for a true welcome. Although the Lord had sent Elijah to the widow with the assurance that she would sustain him, he made no greater demands upon her than simply to supply his immediate necessity.

He didn't ride up with a high head and call for hot coffee and chicken to begin with, and tell her to send her boy out to put his camel up, but only asked for a little bread and water to take the keen edge from his appetite, and when a preacher gets to where he is willing to live on bread and water if need be, rather than leave the ministry, there is nothing to hinder his preaching the Gospel about right. It never adds anything to a man's preaching power to require an extra amount of waiting upon in his pastoral visiting.

Notice also that the prophet managed to get to

talking about the Lord before he sat down to supper. He didn't lose any time is discussing the drouth, or the slim prospect there was for crops, or in trying to find out how much the widow knew about the affairs of the family in the next house, but he got right down to business for his divine Master before his hostess had put on the kettle to prepare his supper, and he made the leanness of her pantry open the way to tell her some things about the greatness and goodness of his God that brightened her life for many a day.

We ought never to forget that our first business in life is to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ, and to make Him known we should watch for opportunities and improve them with tact. Some preachers would have been in Zarephath a week before the widow found out whether they belonged to church or not.

It is a lamentable fact that there are preachers who so exhaust the subject of religion on Sunday that they appear to avoid it all the rest of the week. Ministers can be found who almost touch the stars when they preach who carefully avoid the subject of religion when they visit the sick.

No matter where we find Elijah his position at that moment may be studied with profit. See him as he stands on Mount Carmel, strong and straight as an oak, while the storm gathers darkly about him. He wasn't afraid of provoking opposition. He had faith for a great revival, and had no fear that the interest would be killed by somebody's indiscretion or a change of weather. And how plain his preaching was that day to Ahab:

"Ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Think of a preacher speaking out in a way as clear-cut as that in our time to the leading member of his official board. There was no "As it were," or "In a degree," or "So to speak," about it, and yet this was the man who was afterward chosen to be lifted up bodily into heaven. Isn't there something here for us preachers to think about, brethren?

Wouldn't it raise a commotion to hear preaching as plain as that in some of our modern churches? Remember that Ahab was at the head of things on the Mount Carmel work, and his wife had been running the church until she had about come to the conclusion that she owned it, and yet the new preacher got the Bible wide open in his very first sermon.

The great object of the prophet's preaching that day was not to advance his own popularity, or answer infidelity—although the air was full of it, but to bring down fire from heaven that would burn up and destroy idolatrous unbelief. He wasn't there to defend his religion, but to show that God was in it.

He didn't begin his meeting with a series of discourses trying to prove that unbelief was a house built on the sand, but he let his congregation know at once that he stood there in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and he did it, too, in a way that convinced them that he expected wonderful results. There will be no revival when the people can see clear across the house that the preacher isn't expecting much.

When the people had heard the words of Elijah, and had acted upon them by standing near where the blessing was to fall—what Methodists would call coming around the altar—he took immediate steps to fulfill all the human conditions for promoting the revival by repairing the altar of the Lord that was broken down. God never sends any fire to a broken-down altar. Let us remember that.

It is folly to look for any marked conversions in a church where there is no true and earnest worship. It would be as reasonable to look for wheat where nothing but chaff had been planted. Sinners never become anxious while the church is sound asleep. Before the fire will come the broken-down altar must be rebuilt. Pastor and people must be very close together, and all looking straight up. Fire will never fall from heaven until it has a clean place upon which to strike.

The prophets of Baal were impatient to begin early in the morning, without a care as to whether their altar was in a condition to receive the sacrifice or not. Mere professors are always in a hurry to have a protracted meeting over with. Like any other disagreeable duty it cannot be finished too quickly, but the great Carmelite was in no hurry. Walking by faith and not by sight he knew that he had certainty before him, and could afford to wait. He was bound to have things right to begin with if it took all summer. Hence, with the greatest deliberation and care he gave strict attention to all things needful, and neglected nothing. He looked after matters himself, and

knew of his own personal knowledge that no part of the work had been slighted.

He didn't appoint one committee to get the stones together and another to lay them up, nor did he depend upon somebody working by the day to dig the trench, but he hung his sheepskin mantle on the nearest limb, rolled up his sleeves and went to work himself.

No wonder that at the proper time he could look into the sky and call for fire with as much confidence as a child would ask for bread. He knew that his part had been done faithfully and well, and this gave him courage to fold his arms complacently and call for cold salt water until he wore the opposition clear out.

Another important thing to notice is that the prophet called upon the Lord at the proper time as well as in the proper place. He waited until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. Some preachers would have felt like giving up in discouragement because the fire didn't come before noon, and others would have dismissed the meeting and gone back down the hill, feeling sure that they were in the wrong business because it didn't cloud up and begin to thunder early in the morning. The Bible makes it plain that God has a time for doing things as well as a way of doing them, but some folks never seem to find it out.

The preacher needs sanctified common sense about as much as he does religion. We must know when to introduce the subject of religion as well as how to do it. God needs intelligent service in the ministry

quite as much as He does blind loyalty that is willing to go to the stake. Pounding the Bible and making a noise in church is one thing, and winning men to Christ is another.

Peter was made a fisher of men quite as much because he had good judgment as because he had a big heart; and Paul probably caught more by his tact than he did by preaching all night. He was able to do this because he had learned some things in the making and selling of tents that he couldn't learn at the feet of Gamaliel. It was because he knew human nature as well as he knew Greek that he didn't lose his head at Athens, and it was because he knew the way into a soldier's heart that he was able to gain converts in Cæsar's household. The man who will take a crowbar to open an oyster has no business in the ministry, but he too often gets there. Tact wins where great gifts without it are sure to fail.

Some preachers whose hearts are full of love fail in their ministry because their heads are not also full of practical wisdom. The fact is, that the more love a man has in his heart the more he needs brains in his head. Unless he is as wise as a serpent he cannot be as harmless as a dove.

If the old serpent in Eden had been as ignorant of human nature as some preachers are, I don't believe there would have been any fall. The fact is, that the man who fishes for men must learn to use all kinds of means and all kinds of bait. If we don't know how to do this we are on the wrong track if we spend all our time in the study of books.

There is an occasional man in the ministry who would add greatly to his preaching power by giving up the making of sermons for a while to saw logs in a lumber camp, or become a brakeman on some good railroad. Such men have never learned the important lesson that a man with black hair is a different being altogether from one whose beard is red.

The scene where Elijah goes to the mountain top and puts his face between his knees ought to teach us several things about how to proceed when we would have a revival. The first noticeable thing is that he got as near heaven himself as he could to begin with.

The revival that comes from God must begin in the preacher's own heart. It is impossible to warm up the church while there is a freeze up in the pulpit. Until the preacher is right with God and filled with the Spirit, everybody in the congregation knows that a revival is not expected, but only let the soul of the preacher first be warmed by heavenly fire and what a difference it will make. He will not conclude that it is not God's time to work because there is only a handful of people in the house on the opening night, and it will not dampen his ardor to see those who try the hardest to run the church occupying back seats. With every fresh disappointment his soul will cry out with new expectation, "Go again, look toward the sea," and he will keep on praying and looking until the promised and expected storm of revival comes in sight.

It seems clear that this part of the prophet's history

was put in God's book to teach us that we have a right to count on glorious results, no matter how disheartening may be the indifference and opposition, when we know in our souls that we have done our prayerful best and complied with God's conditions.

It would be well in this connection to remember that Elijah did not look for a drop of rain until the broken-down altar had been rebuilt, and he had restored purity to worship by the destruction of Baal's prophets. There is no use in counting upon much of an outpouring of the Spirit as long as we know that our motives are selfish.

The old man's faith held firm because he kept looking toward the source of blessing. He didn't pay any attention to the fact that everything about him was as dry as preaching, but bade his servant to keep on looking toward the sea from which he expected the cloud to come, and as soon as he knew that one the size of a man's hand could be seen, he knew that his prayer for a great storm had been answered. God had taught him some lessons with the widow's meal that he had not forgotten. Many of us want to see the dust flying and the sky turning black all over before we begin to count much on results, but with Elijah God's word for a thing was enough.

There was no sense in the prophet going on the dead gallop before the chariot of Ahab down to Jezreel, and he wouldn't have done it either, but for the wonderful time he had been having on the top of Mount Carmel. He made a fool of himself then, just as men do in election times now, because his head

had been so turned by his great success that he didn't more than half know what he was about.

It was a great waste of strength for him to race with a rain-storm through the dust for seventeen miles, and he might have been much better employed in other ways, but he was so puffed up with pride just then that he wanted to go into Jezreel at the head of the procession, and give the people down there a chance to see for themselves what the man who could bring fire from heaven looked like.

This made him forget God, and get where divine aid couldn't reach him, and things like that are still happening in a spiritual way to-day. The story of Mount Carmel one week, and the juniper tree and the cavern the next, is still repeating itself all around the world. The fact is, that nothing can wear out men of God any faster than running before the chariot of Ahab, but as long as the devil can sometimes get a preacher to forget the Lord and look at himself, there will be plenty of that kind of racing done.

What a contrast between the conduct of the prophet when he stood boldly on the mountain top, openly defying the organized enemies of his God, and the cowardly man who is stealing away in the darkness because an angry woman has threatened to take his life. He fails now because he has taken the campaign into his own hands, and has stopped seeking guidance from the Lord. That is why he forgets all about the past and breaks pell-mell for the wilderness.

If he would only stop for a moment and think of

the years when the ravens fed him, and when the widow's meal and oil failed not, his blood would soon be filled with iron again, and he would go back and tell Jezebel to her face that her father had a cloven hoof. The devil could never keep a backslider in his army over night if he couldn't make him entirely forget the past goodness of his God.

How full of light and hope the verses relating to Elijah in the desert ought to be for each one of us. God never gives up a man who has good timber in him simply because he has made a mistake. What a blessed thing that the record of Peter's life didn't end with the scene where he denied his Lord, and that Elijah's grave was not made under the juniper tree.

In every case where there is gold in a man God sticks to him until he brings it out. Our fellow men turn coldly away from us when we fail to accomplish the great things we set out to do, but God never does. When the prodigal got home he found his father looking for him, but his brother never expected him to come back.

It was a great mistake for the prophet to go in "the strength of that meat" forty days, although it was bread that had come down from above. If there is any man who needs to have his meals with regularity it is the one who is working for Christ. As long as the prophet was having bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh at night, his faith was all right.

Whenever you find a preacher who has lost his

spiritual power, and has begun to howl and growl about the shortcomings of everybody else, you can put it down for a fact that he has been neglecting his Bible and his closet. The order in the wilderness was that the manna should be gathered fresh every day, and that is still the divine requirement.

Find a minister whose heart is not in his work, and you find one who has become so much occupied with other things that he has no time to pray in secret. It may be that one reason why the Church is so slow about reaching the masses is that the mass of her preachers do not pray half enough. When Jesus prayed all night the multitude sought Him in the morning.

When the prophet's attention was fixed solely upon God he was not afraid of all the false prophets Ahab could bring out against him, but when he got to looking only at men his blood turned to water at once. When the devil can get a preacher to think that he is about the only out-and-out religious man in the county, he is very well satisfied with his day's work; and when we can't see anything in other people that suits us, the chances are that we need a revival in our own hearts.

The Lord showed Himself decidedly in favor of the itinerancy by the way He handled Elijah from the start. He knew His man too well to keep him too long in the same place. Without the time limit it may be that the Carmelite would have dropped clear out of sight. Many a man is kept bright because the Lord will not let him get into an easy corner and go

to rust. By moving Elijah around the Lord ground down some of his rough corners and made him a success.

No preacher can be judged correctly by what he has done in a single place. The man who falls down flat in one church may flourish like a palm tree in the next. The right kind of a man can always learn something valuable from a mistake. He doesn't fall down on the same banana skin twice. The evangelist Mark wasn't much account with Paul, but he got along fine with Barnabas, and it may be that had Elijah been sent back to Jezreel he would not have been any braver in the pulpit than some of the rest of us.

It is more than likely that the ministry and methods of Elijah were much criticized by all kinds of people, and it may be that other prophets scored him without mercy, and pommelled him hard with clubs cut from the juniper tree every chance they got, but nothing is more certain than that his ministry was a great success as seen from where angels look, for as soon as a competent man was found to succeed him, he was promoted to an appointment in the city of light, where, for aught we can tell to the contrary, he may have been engaged ever since in trying to tell sinless hosts what God is doing down here on the earth.

Without stopping to change his clothes he was sent sweeping through the gates in a jewelled chariot that blazed like fire, and for the first time in the annals of heaven, as his shining car swept over the sea

of glass, and up through the streets of transparent gold, the angels had a chance to see for themselves just what a faithful veteran fresh from the front looked like.

And then centuries later, when redemption was about to become an established fact, by "the decease soon to be accomplished at Jerusalem," and a companion was wanted to journey with Moses on his long-delayed visit to the Promised Land, and take part in the transfiguration scene, it was the faithful old circuit preacher, who had once been lost for three years in the obscurity of the Brook Cherith, who was honored above all the shining hosts of heaven by being chosen for the glorious expedition.

Surely this last and brightest view of the prophet ought to teach us, that on the heights of glory in the ages to come, the crowning place may be that bestowed upon some faithful man of God who often had obscure appointments, and what the world would call a hard way of getting along while in the flesh.

May the God of Elijah give us all a fresh inspiration, by the time we have been spending with the faithful Tishbite, to be more unselfishly in earnest in our Master's service.

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